

# MAUD'S LESSON.

BY KATE SEAFOAM.

"REALLY, Mr. Irving, you do not intend to bring that child here, to take her home with you?" Mrs. Irving asked, sharply, as she drew her napkin from the ring with an indignant twitch.

Mr. Irving looked wonderingly at his wife, and then nervously replied:

"Why, yes, my dear. You would not surely expect nor want me to leave my only brother's child among strangers, would you?"

A slight flush tinged the marble-like whiteness of the elegant lady's face, and she hesitated a moment ere she made any response to this evidently disagreeable question, toying nervously with her spoon; then she said, coldly:

"Probably the child would be much better off and contented among the rude farmers, where she has been reared, than with us in the city. And then it is as much as I can do to look after this young lady, who is such a tax upon my strength and patience; and I'm sure I should not know what to do with an awkward coarse country girl." And the lady assumed a languid air of injured elegance.

Mr. Irving looked shocked at this want of feeling, but replied, slowly:

"O well; perhaps they may help to amuse each other; so Maud may not trouble you so much. I think, my dear Maud, this cousin Agnes must be very near your age, and it will be nice for you to have a companion in the house." And Mr. Irving looked fondly, proudly upon his fair daughter, his only child, who sat beside him at the elegantly-spread table.

Maud's full red lips curled contemptuously and she replied:

"Why, papa, mamma just called this cousin an awkward country girl, and I should not think you would expect me to take her for a companion. I shall be ashamed of her, I know, and I do hope you won't bring her here." And petted, vain Maud closed her mouth in a decided pout.

Mr. Irving gave Maud a reproachful glance and sighed deeply, but made no reply.

The meal was finished in silence, and when Mr. Irving rose from the table he said, sadly:

"I shall leave for the West in the first train in the morning, hoping I may find my brother alive. I shall be obliged to sit up very late and work steadily to arrange my business to be absent a few days; so I will

bid you good-by now, my dear, as you will not rise so early in the morning." And he turned to Maud, who was still pouting. He took her in his arms tenderly, but she returned his affectionate kiss coldly, and sighing again, he said:

"Well, good-by, my dear Maud! God bless and keep you, till my return." And kissing her tenderly again, he went to the library.

Mr. Irving, a wealthy merchant, whose elegant residence was located in the suburbs of the busy city, had received a letter that day announcing the fatal illness of his only brother, who had expressed an earnest desire to see him once more, and begged him to care for his only child, a girl near Maud's age.

The brothers had been widely separated, and had not seen each other for years, yet had continued an occasional correspondence. The merchant had been closely confined to his business, which increased, and became more prosperous each year. His brother, who had been unfortunate in business, went to the West when quite young, married, and settled down to the quiet life of a farmer. In a few years he suffered a great affliction by the death of his dearly beloved wife. He was deeply affected by this loss, and avoided all society, tenderly caring for his affectionate little daughter who was but two years of age when her mother died.

The brothers were strongly attached to each other in youth, and though separated they held loving remembrance, and it was with a sadly anxious heart, that Maud's father started upon his journey, which was embittered by the cold selfishness of his wife and daughter.

He was in time to receive his brother's last farewell, and earnest entreaty that he would ever care for his little orphaned Agnes, as he would for his own child.

Mr. Irving tearfully promised, and when all was over he took the weeping stricken little orphan away and strove to comfort her as affectionately as if she had been his own child. When the last sad rites were over, the necessary preparations made to leave the farm, she clung to him as fondly as a child to a father, and during the greater part of the sad wearisome journey, her small dark head was pillowed upon his arm.

It was the evening of a dismal dreary

day when they came to the end of their long journey, and the grieved little orphan, clad in sombre black, plainly made, so weary she could hardly hold her head up, was not a very bright or interesting object to a gay heart—and thoughtless Maud stared contemptuously at her, and when her kind-hearted father, after warmly embracing her, said:

"Now come and kiss your poor afflicted cousin, my dear Maud," her pretty face expressed the greatest contempt as she flipantly replied:

"No, thank you, papa! I'd rather be excused."

Mr Irving stared at his daughter, too surprised and indignant to speak for a moment, scarcely believing he had heard aright; then in a reproachful tone he said:

"Maud! Ah! how can you be so cruel! Have you no feeling at all?"

Maud laughed outright, looking contemptuously at the little shrinking figure in black again, as she murmured, "she's such a queer-looking dowdiness thing!"

"Maud!" her father called sternly again, "call your mother, and then leave the room. I am ashamed of you, really!"

"Mamma has gone to Mrs. Wadleigh's reception, papa, so I can't call her," Maud surlily replied.

"Well, Maud, I want you to see that your cousin has something warm to take, and that there is a fire in her room," Mr. Irving said, rather sternly.

"Certainly, papa, I will ring for Mary, and she will see that she is well taken care of, I suppose," Maud answered, as she quickly rang the bell.

"But I wish you to see that Mary does attend to her well, my dear, as your cousin is very tired, and nearly ill from grief."

Maud tossed her head disdainfully, but ere she could reply, Mary, the Irish maid, entered the room, and turning to her, Mr. Irving repeated his orders concerning poor little Agnes. With many profuse expressions of sympathy for "the poor dear creature, the blighted child," Mary promised to care for her, and bidding little Agnes an affectionate good-night, Mr. Irving hastened away to the store, before it was closed for the night. As soon as her uncle, who had so tenderly comforted her in her grief, left her, poor little Agnes felt forsaken indeed. She saw, and felt keenly at once that her gay pretty cousin had no

sympathy for her, and even disliked her. When kind-hearted Mary left them to prepare for the little stranger's comfort, Maud crossed the room to the window, and drumming lightly on the pane, she hummed a gay air carelessly. Sad and weary, such a sense of loneliness came over the little orphan she could not restrain her tears. When Mary returned with warm tea and a delicate repast, she found Agnes crying softly.

"Shure now, ye mustn't take it to heart so, my dear. Ye'll be sick, it's thrue now, if yees go on so. Shure Miss Maud'll hearten ye up a bit—it's lonely and sorry ye are, an' no wonder at it aither, taken from yere home in graif so! The poor child, she cries so, mebbe ye has a kind tinder word for her, Miss Maud," said Mary, crooningly, turning to Maud.

"If she will cry, I'm sure I don't know how I can help it—I don't see why she need to make such a fuss," Maud said, testily, as she turned from the window.

"Fuss? Shure, the poor dear's heart is touched, miss, an' may the good Father save ye from any such throuble! Shure, it isn't fuss at all, but graif, miss!" Mary replied, indignantly; and then she strove in her rude but kindly way to soothe the grieved child, urging her to drink the warm tea and eat something.

Agnes yielded to these earnest entreaties, and drank the tea, but her heart was too full to eat.

Mary led the weeping little girl to her well-warmed room without even a good-night from Maud, who muttered as they left her:

"What a fright she is, really! Well, if papa would bring her here I'll try my best to make her sick of it, so she'll be glad to go away."

Instead of going to sleep at once, to rest herself as Mary told her to, poor little Agnes lay awake grieving a long while, until she cried herself to sleep.

In the morning she awoke with a weary sense of loss and loneliness. She arose at her usual time, which was some earlier than that of the other members of this fashionable family. Hastening through her plain but neat toilet, she sat down by the window dreamily thinking, her sore heart sadly yearning for the simple joys of the past, dreading the untried future which promised to be anything but pleasant.

She started nervously at the sound of the breakfast bell. In a few minutes Mary looked in, saying that her uncle feared she might be ill this morning. Agnes assured her she felt quite well.

"An' shure, dear child, it is anything but well you look, wid that pale face an' such weary sad eyes. But mebbe ye'll hearten up a bit after a nice warm breakfast. Come till I show you the way to get it now, where your good uncle is waiting. Shure, an' it isn't ivery lone orphan that gits the like of sich a fine home!" kindly Mary continued, as Agnes followed her with nervous timidity to the tastefully-spread breakfast.

Her uncle greeted her kindly, but the sensitive little girl shrank back with a feeling akin to fear, from the cold salutation, which could not justly be called a welcome, of the elegant haughty lady, her aunt. Maud did not notice her enough to speak to her this morning, but as she sat opposite to her at the table, she was awkwardly conscious of her scornful glances during the unpleasant meal—and had it not been for her uncle's kindly solicitude she would have found it impossible to have eaten anything.

How distinctly, sadly, as she returned to her beautiful but lonely room, did her loved father's words, the last he had spoken to her, repeat themselves, with such mournful intensity.

"I do not even know, my dearest Agnes, to what a home I am sending you. I know that your uncle is wealthy, that he married a beautiful wealthy lady, and has a daughter very near your age. Ah! my dear, it is not always the most elegant home that is the happiest—it is the sunshine of love that beautifies and makes home pleasant. Your uncle is very kind and fond, was always tender-hearted, and I feel that he will, as he says, do all he can to make you happy; as I should for his child; yet I feel, lying here so near to our final parting, that there is an element in that new elegant home, which will make it very pleasant or unpleasant for my orphaned child. God grant, in his mercy, that it may be pleasant! But O my dear, whatever it may be, be patient, my child, believing it all for the best!"

And as the days wore on, days of loneliness and keen suffering to the sensitive little girl, how often that remembrance returned so vividly, and much need she had of patience and self-control!

To a frank-hearted, loving, sensitive child there could not have been a harder life than that which poor Agnes suffered with her wealthy relatives. Her aunt was a haughty cold-hearted woman, to whom the sad pale-faced little orphan was but an object of disgust. Devoted to fashion and selfish pleasure, all that was noble in her nature was sadly warped; and her only child, pretty, vain Maud, left almost entirely to the care of hirelings, where her undisciplined childish will was law, provided it did not interfere with her lady mother's plans, was but just such a girl at twelve years of age as might have been expected. Left to her own devices, vanity and self-will had rapidly and easily developed. Her fond father, to whom the fairy-like cunning child was the loveliest thing in the world, had ever most indulgently petted her; and now, when her really faulty disposition became so insolently apparent, he was helplessly shocked. He weakly plead with her to be kind to her orphaned cousin. But to the vain selfish heart, which had till now held undivided sway, this request was jealously irksome.

Before her father Maud cunningly strove to be coldly respectful to Agnes. But as soon as her kind uncle left the house, Agnes was continually subjected to the most merciless ridicule, the most offensive behaviour. This deceptive course was of itself a torture to the frank girl, who had never practised deceit in her life.

Even her grief, so keenly felt, was made the subject of cruel ridicule by thoughtless Maud. Poor Agnes's pillow was wet with her tears every night, as she cried in her unloved loneliness till she fell asleep. As a natural consequence, her clear dark eyes looked unusually large and sad, encircled by dark rings. Now her beautiful eyes and abundant wavy brown hair had been her loved father's especial pride, being like her mother's, and he often praised them. With-out vanity, Agnes was pleased with them for this reason. Thus it was harder to bear, when in her cruel ridicule her cousin Maud called her, "Our long-faced nun, wall-eyed divinity," or "country gawky."

As weak little Agnes strove to maintain her self-control, to bear patiently her cruel taunts, so much the more did Maud torment her to make her yield to weakness, and reproach her ill-naturedly, or cry. The human heart when undisciplined, without

restraint, is prone to be tyrannical—and Maud often persisted in her cruel ridicule, until Agnes was nearly wild or forced to tears, as she tremulously besought her to leave her alone. Then Maud would taunt her as being spiritless, calling her a "booby," while the naturally high-spirited girl was nearly beside herself in her efforts to obey her father's dying injunction to be patient.

Her haughty aunt never uttered one word of reproof, but by her manner rather encouraged her daughter in her ill-behaviour. Agnes knew not a moment of quiet when Maud was at home, unless her uncle was present. He could not but notice her changed looks and appearance, and when, in the library alone, whither he had taken her with him one evening when his wife and daughter were away, he questioned her about her health, and asked her if she was not happy with them; if she missed the old home so much, the fond caress, so like her affectionate father, the kindly solicitude, touched her grieved heart. She began to cry, and tenderly soothing her he begged her to tell him if any one was unkind to her. But to his earnest questionings and plain inquiries concerning Maud, all he could get her to admit was that Maud did not like her. Seeing that she did not wish to censure them, to make trouble, he comforted her, coming at once to the conclusion, that not liking her, Maud annoyed her all she could; that the child he sought to make happy was suffering. At the first opportunity he spoke to his wife about it, then to Maud; but they both indignantly denied causing her any unhappiness, and then they insolently accused little Agnes of complaining to her uncle about them, Mrs. Irving going so far as to threaten to punish her; and thinking they had effectually silenced her, Maud became more arbitrary than before, and Agnes suffered deeply for her uncle's tender solicitude.

Nearly three months had passed in this manner. The cold dreary winter had given place to the mild days of late spring. The fruit trees, white with delicate blossoms, filled the air with sweet fragrance. In the tastefully arranged flower-garden, gorgeous tulips and modest fleur-de-lis were flowering plentifully, while the later plants were budding profusely. The sweet wild birds sang joyously, melodiously, all through the sunny days, flitting gayly among the thick

shrubbery. To lonely Agnes it seemed a welcome dream of the dear home life; for with a decidedly rural taste, having been reared on a farm, the opulent merchant never would reside in the noisy city, and his elegant home was located in a very quiet place, surrounded by extensive grounds. The first overwhelming keenness of grief had, with the hopefulness and elasticity of youth, passed from little Agnes's heart, and if it had not been for the unpleasantness of this fine home, she might have been happy.

Mr. Irving, as he took his seat at the table one evening, missed the sad wistful face to which he had become accustomed. He waited a few moments expecting Agnes to enter, and then he asked where she was.

"I am sure I do not know," his wife replied, arching her eyebrows, as she looked queerly at him.

"Maud, do you know where your cousin is?" he asked, turning to Maud.

"I am sure I do not; she is such a queer odd creature one never can tell where she may be, or what she is doing," Maud carelessly replied.

In a few moments Mr. Irving said:

"Please see if you can find your cousin, Maud."

Maud, instead of going herself, touched the bell and Mary quickly appeared, and Maud said:

"Papa wants you to find Agnes—perhaps she is in her room."

Mary hastily disappeared. Mr. Irving looked strangely at his forward daughter, and Mrs. Irving said, testily:

"What a fuss about that girl!"

"Indade, an' she isn't in her room, at all, Miss Maud," said Mary, as she returned.

"Do you think she has gone away anywhere beyond the garden?" Mr. Irving asked, anxiously.

"Did ye spake to me, sir?" Mary asked, respectfully, lingering as if there was something more she wished to say.

"Well, yes, Mary," he slowly replied.

"One would think it an alarming matter for her to be a little late at her meals," Mrs. Irving sneeringly interrupted.

"It is, at least, strange in one so prompt and orderly as little Agnes is," Mr. Irving replied. "And now, Mary, have you seen Miss Agnes in the past hour?" he asked.

Mary hesitated a moment with drooping

face, and then flinging her head up defiantly, she said:

"Shure it's a burning shame, it is so, sir, for the dear lone child to be trated so, as might have sich a fine home here, wid a plinty."

Mrs. Irving gave Mary a threatening glance, and she continued, nervously:

"Shure, I'd spake out, mum, for the poor child, if I'd lave at once!"

"Well, well, Mary," Mr. Irving said, soothingly, "tell if you know where Agnes is."

"Indade, an' I couldn't tell ef she come back yit! All I can tell is that I saw her run down the garden like mad, wid a wild look in her pooty eyes, an' her little hands clinched when she broke away from Miss Maud, an' she a torminting the very life out of her! Shure, she wint toward the old summer-house at the end of the garden. An' a big shame it is to thrate a poor lone child so, I'm frae to say, sir, maneing no offinse to you at all, sir!" and tender-hearted Mary turned hastily from the room with her wide apron to her eyes.

A moment's silence, and then Mr Irving said, sternly:

"Maud, I am ashamed for you! Sarah, I would not have believed you would have allowed this!"

"What a fuss about nothing, truly! If the silly child chooses to stay away and pout, it is no concern of mine. I told you before you brought her here, that I could not take the trouble upon myself," Mrs. Irving replied, while Maud sat sulking.

Mr. Irving rose from the table, saying, sadly:

"Well, it is my concern to see that my brother's orphan is cared for, kindly treated, and I will go and look for her."

"Whoever heard of such a thing! Why, one would think we had murdered the precious child!" Mrs. Irving said.

"I don't believe papa would make such a time if I was dead," Maud said, indignantly.

"Maud!" her father said, sternly, "I am anxious, I confess, about Agnes; perhaps it is because she has, as you must have seen, looked so sad and unwell of late, and I am so grieved, my daughter, that you should have made her so unhappy, when you might have made it so pleasant for her," he added, and passed out.

Mr. Irving hurried through the garden,

and as he neared the old summer-house a low pitiful moaning caused him to hasten his steps, and told him that Agnes was there. He hurriedly entered, and bending above the seat where she lay, he called her name twice, anxiously. She made no reply, but still that mournful sound continued. The evening air was damp and chilly, and as he quickly took her in his arms, tenderly calling her name, her hair was cold and moist, but her face was feverishly hot to his hand.

"O, I'm afraid they've killed the poor child!" he murmured sadly, as he walked swiftly to the house.

He bore his unconscious burden to the warm sitting-room, and when he was able to see her distinctly, he started back in alarm, ringing the bell violently. Mary appeared, and he said with much agitation, as she gazed in affright at the convulsively working face, the small dark head turning restlessly from side to side, such a wild light in the sad eyes—

"Tell Tom to go for Dr. Ayers instantly, and ask Mrs. Irving to come here."

Mary lost no time in doing her errand, and soon Mrs. Irving entered the room followed by Maud. They both started back as they looked at the moaning figure on the lounge, which Mr. Irving was bending over. Rising he said:

"She is very ill, I fear; I have sent for the doctor, and I wish you would have her placed carefully in bed. I will carry her up stairs myself."

"But is she unconscious? How she moans!" Mrs. Irving asked, nervously, turning pale; and he replied:

"Yes, she is wholly unconscious. Ah, how she moans! And I promised my brother to care for her as I would have my Maud cared for! Would you like to be treated so, Maud? This child would not have treated you nor any one else so."

Maud shrank back pale and trembling, but did not reply. Agnes was tenderly placed in bed by tearful Mary who was very fond of the gentle lone orphan, and soon Dr. Ayers arrived. He examined his little patient critically, and said, turning to Mrs. Irving. "What's the matter here? Has this child been studying too hard, or how has the nervous system, the brain, been so terribly taxed? There has been some severe shock here! She's of a sensitive nervous temperament, and should be care-

fully reared," he continued, thoughtfully, as no one replied to his query, passing his cool hand slowly over the hot restless head.

"Whose child is this, Mr. Irving?" he asked.

"My brother's. She has grieved much for her father of whom she was very fond. He died several months ago," Mr. Irving answered, wishing to account for the child's condition.

"Ah, yes! I heard of his death, I think," the keen doctor said, musingly, as if not fully satisfied. "She's rather young to grieve so, but then she is rather a superior child, I should judge—quite a fine head there," he added, as he prepared the medicine.

Then followed days which one does not like to pass through or think of. In spite of the utmost skill and attention which the learned physician lavishly bestowed upon this patient in whom he was from the first deeply interested, little Agnes came very near to death. Mr. Irving was nearly beside himself with anxiety. Poor Maud, so terribly awakened to the enormity of her offence, was in a most pitiable state of nervous excitement, and nearly ill. It seemed almost impossible for her to stay away from the sick room, though not allowed to enter, during those days of wild delirium, when brain fever nearly scorched the life out of the frail body. Maud heard the wild pitiful wailing, the delirious words in which her own name was often uttered in tremulous entreaty, as she crouched pale and tearful by the door, no one being admitted but the nurse and physician and a daily call granted to Mr. Irving.

Maud had followed her father to the door that day, and when he came out pale and tearful, she cried out, "O papa, she won't die, will she? O, I never *never* will do so again! O, I'm so sorry!" And sobbing bitterly, her father led her away, trying to comfort her.

Then Dr. Ayers passed along to the sick one, murmuring, "Ah! I thought so, Miss Maud! I must try to cure both." The next day he found Maud waiting for him, and she said tearfully, looking wistfully up in his face:

"You will do all you can for Agnes, doctor?"

"Certainly, my dear Maud—you may come in to see her," he gently replied, taking her hand. She started forward

eagerly, but drew back timidly as she entered the darkened room and heard her name uttered. But Dr. Ayers drew her along firmly up beside the bed till she saw the little fever-wasted face plainly tossing upon the pillow. Then he sat down holding her closely to him while she listened in remorse and shame to the pitiful voice. At last she could bear it no longer, and she begged him to let her leave the room. Kissing her fondly, he said:

"You won't do so any more, will you, Maud?"

"O, I never, *never* will!" she moaned, as she hurried away.

And when danger was over, and consciousness returned, all through the weak convalescence, Maud and her fair mother, whose haughty heart was wholly softened, never tired of caring for the now dear child—striving in every way to amuse her.

When Dr. Ayers made his last call upon his rapidly recovering patient, accompanied by Mr. Irving, who said earnestly to him, "Thank God it is past, doctor! I wouldn't go through with it again for a good deal!" the doctor replied:

"It was hard! But, my dear sir, the useful lesson your sweet Maud has learned is worth much suffering. That is a pretty

picture!" And he pointed to where the beautiful Maud, doubly beautiful for the tender spiritualized beauty which shone from her pearl-like face, sat in a low rocker beside her pale cousin's lounging-chair, reading softly to her, while loving Agnes, with thin tremulous hand, fondly stroked her golden hair and fastened a royal pansy in the clustering mass, caressingly.

It was a sweet, a lovely picture. The elegant room filled with the halo of ripe June sunshine, the rich lace curtains *fluttering gently in the soft breeze*, richly freighted with the fragrance of many roses.

"Beautiful, truly!" Mr. Irving said, softly. "Ah! It is worth much, this needful lesson, and I would not part with that new beauty my dear Maud has gained. The thoughtless heart has many lessons to learn through suffering."

"May they all be lasting?" the doctor fervently replied.

And Maud's lesson was lasting. Agnes had at last a happy home, beautified with the sunshine of love, which her tender sensitive nature craved, while Maud found a loving companion in the once neglected child, and true pleasure in unselfish love and thoughtfulness for the happiness of others.

## MAY AND SEPTEMBER.

BY MARY A. LOWELL.

In a well-furnished apartment in one of the houses in Bloomingdale Street, there sat, on the morning I speak of, three persons. One was a man, whose smooth brow and unfaded locks told nothing of age, but whose limbs were completely paralyzed. The second was a lady who might once have possessed great beauty, but on whom consumption was making hasty and unmistakable ravages. The third was a girl of eighteen or nineteen, whose likeness to each, as well as her evident devotion to their wants, proclaimed her their daughter. Kate Ashcroft was not beautiful, in the common acceptance of the word. She had fine expressive eyes and a sweet mouth; but even these did not entitle her to be called a beauty. The highest charm of her face was a sweet and lovely expression, speaking of inward peace and gentle kindly thoughts.

Mr. Ashcroft had long been a miserable invalid. When still in the prime of life, paralysis had done its work upon his frame; bringing all the appearances of old age to his noble figure, while his face was still youthful. Mrs. Ashcroft had watched beside him faithfully and devotedly, until consumption had touched her with its chilling fingers, and laid her upon a bed of pain and distress. Thus it fell to the daughter to nurse the two beloved invalids; and she did it with a devotion that made the task light. She was the light of their eyes—the only being whom they could not cheerfully give up, in the prospect of death.

What would she do when they were gone, was a question that weighed upon their minds most heavily. They had no relatives near enough to take an interest in their child; and the few friends they possessed were in foreign lands. Judge then how desolate was the path which seemed to be before the daughter they loved so well. It added, too, to their anxiety, that they must leave her penniless. Sickness had melted away their resources, until the little that was left would hardly, Mr. Ashcroft thought, pay the expenses of the double funeral which must inevitably follow their long and lingering illness.

"Do not grieve so, dearest father," Kate had been saying, "I shall surely be provided for. I can work as well as many others. The little I shall want, I can earn."

Her father gazed at her with tearful eyes. "Poor child!" he exclaimed; "how little you know of the world. How will you, who have known so little of the trials of life, be able to stem the rude torrent of adversity? How will you bear up against the terrible burden of poverty? Will those little hands be strong enough to earn your daily bread? You, who have never been trained to work, who have never borne the weight of crushing sorrow—O merciful Father! do thou temper the wind to this shorn lamb! Bring her into thy fold, and make her thy especial care!"

Tears hot and bitter impeded his utterance. It was long ere Kate could soothe him into anything like composure. Mute and still was the mother's grief, yet as deep as that of her husband. All the terrors of a desolate lonely life for Kate uprose before her; yet she conquered all trace of emotion. It was but the prelude to greater suffering, for that night saw her in the shadow of the dark valley. The breaking of a blood-vessel was the consequence of her suppressed emotions, and before morning the weary spirit was released from the suffering body.

"There sat the shadow feared of man."

More rapidly than ever, Mr. Ashcroft was failing. The death of his wife was his own deathblow. From the moment of her departure, he ceased to speak, and lay wrapped in silent grief. It was pitiful, indeed, to see poor Kate. She went from room to room, to look upon her mother's lifeless remains, and back again, to try to speak comfort to the poor mute sufferer. Scarcely a day intervened before he, too, was summoned away. "O, for one word—one look of recognition!" sighed the poor girl who hung over him. Alas, it was not granted her. Slowly the pulse ceased beating, and then stopped forever. Kate was indeed doubly orphaned.



Kind neighbors tried to bring comfort to the bereaved girl; but she could not bear the words. She shrank from them as if they touched the very quick; and her well-meaning comforters, at length, left her to herself. When all was over, Kate was told that she must leave the house. It was wanted for a richer tenant. She had not a single dollar. Her furniture was taken away and sold, to pay the rent. All the little ornaments of the rooms, so dear to her because they were the gifts of her parents on successive birthdays, went with the rest; and in the afternoon of the third day from the funeral of both her parents, Kate walked out of the gate and entered a small cottage, poor, mean and old, the only shelter she could afford to rest in.

The next week saw her out in pursuit of employment—something—anything, that would bring her food enough to support life and strength. No foolish pride in Kate's heart held her back from the search after the means of living. Teaching—that resource of almost every girl left to herself—was not included in her catalogue of labor. Kate was intelligent and well-taught; but of the regular routine of school-learning she was ignorant. Of useful information she had a fund. It was imparted to her from childhood, by her father and mother; but neither of her parents was willing to spare her from her home, and therefore, her school knowledge was not extensive. She had learned bookkeeping, however, of her father, who was once a successful merchant, before the hand of disease had touched alike his person and his fortunes. And her first thought was, that she might obtain some situation in which she could make this knowledge count to her for bread.

She entered several stores, modestly offering her services as bookkeeper or cashier; but all those situations were already filled. Next the milliners' shops were tried—then the dressmakers' rooms—shops and rooms which, in better days, her mother had most generously patronized, but which now seemed to have no room for Kate. Her last effort was at a depot for readymade linen. The shopman knew her, and allowed her to carry away some work without the usual deposit of its worth in money. She was glad of even this scanty addition to her means; and half an hour after she left the shop, she was seated in the one

habitable room of her little cottage, sewing diligently upon a garment—the first of her half dozen.

Kate was a rapid and skillful seamstress; and, as her small house required little time to put in order, and her frugal meals still less time to prepare, she was rejoiced to find that she could complete them all in a single week. She was to be paid a half dollar each; and she carried them back, and received her money the next Saturday evening, with a feeling of satisfaction that no one ever experiences unless it is earned. Every week she now earned sufficient for her expenses; and, very soon, she was trusted with finer and more expensive work, until, at last, she could command from six to eight dollars readily. She did this until late in the winter; constantly carrying bundles of work, and enjoying the air and exercise it brought her, without a thought of degradation in so doing.

True, she was sometimes passed without recognition by some who had known her under other circumstances; but Kate's cheerful and independent spirit was far above all this. She looked as serene under the neglect, as if the recognition were ever so cordial; and, so, often shamed the proud ones who could not deny that, in her simple mourning garb, there was an elegance and propriety to which they had never yet attained. Even her package of work did not take from her the unmistakable lady-like appearance inseparable from her; for she carried it with an ease and grace so rare, that it seemed almost the badge of superior gentility. The lovely expression which we have called her highest charm, still illuminated her face, and they who looked at Kate once, were apt to linger in their interested gaze as long as politeness permitted.

She was returning from carrying back some work, one slippery day, when, just as she had shut her own little gate, she slipped upon the ice and fell, breaking her ankle and severely wrenching her left arm. She tried to move and rise; but it was impossible. She uttered a little moan of real pain, and then fainted. She might have lain a full half hour thus, when a gentleman discovered her, and alighted from his chaise. He raised her to a sitting posture, and the pain of being removed recalled her senses. She shrank from his touch for an instant, but soon recovered from her momentary

embarrassment, and gratefully expressed her thanks.

"Whither shall I carry you, my dear young lady?" he asked, kindly.

"This is my home, sir," she answered, producing the house-key.

The gentleman unlocked the door, and Kate strove to rise, but again fainted with the pain. The stranger carried her in and deposited her gently upon the wide comfortable couch which had served as a bed, ever since she removed. He readily found some water which he sprinkled upon her face, and she revived.

"I am a surgeon," said he, smiling, "an old gray-haired surgeon. Will you permit me to examine your injuries?"

There was such a fatherly manner about him, that Kate could but submit to holding out her arm and foot for his inspection.

"You have hurt yourself more than I I thought, young lady," he said, in a tone so cheerful that Kate felt as if she had found a friend. "But it will all be right soon, if only you will have a little courage for a short time."

"O, I have plenty of that," answered Kate; "but I lack the fortitude of enduring long-continued pain. Will it be long, sir?" she asked, anxiously.

"Not if you have good nursing."

"Ah, that is out of the question, sir."

"Why so? Have you no mother or sister?"

Kate's eyes filled with tears.

"I have neither," she said, after a pause in which she was weeping bitterly.

"No friend who can be with you now, while I mend this broken limb?" he asked, while looking at the small white arm bared for his inspection.

"I have no friends," she murmured.

It was a short sentence, but it went to Doctor Broderick's heart.

"No friends! Poor young lady!"

But before he could say a word more, Kate had hushed her emotions, awakened by his question, and was her own calm collected self again. She bore the setting of her ankle, like a hero, and submitted to have her arm violently pulled, without flinching. Then she sat upright, and looked this new helper in the face. He was a man of, apparently, forty years of age; tall, and not slender; with large benevolent brown eyes, and a few white streaks in his dark abundant hair; a gentleman,

in the broadest sense of the word, a scholar and a good surgeon. Kate's simple straight-forward mind had divined what he was, and her eyes took in the details, as well as the meaning of his face; a face so entirely good that a little child might read it. Her heart instinctively told him that here, at any rate, was a man who would never deceive.

She had heard of him—heard how beloved and trusted he had been, in his native city—a neighboring one where he had always practised—had heard of more than one grand and noble deed he had performed. She had learned, also, that in his younger years he had been sorely smitten with disappointment—had laid all his hopes of a happy domestic life upon a broken shrine, and had beheld them waste away into utter decay.

All these things rushed to her memory, when he told her his name. She remembered, too, that her father had desired to call him in, when her mother was ill, but that she had opposed it. Her mother was always so much afraid of expense which she knew would not avail to save her life, and she wanted so much to leave something for Kate, when she should have passed away! Poor woman! could she have known Kate's present situation, there would have been one pang more in her dying hour.

"I shall ride over to see how you are, to-morrow," he said kindly, as he went out. "You must be quiet as possible, but I will lend you my cane, so if you want to come and lock me out, you can do so."

And Kate did rise and go to the door with him, despite the grotesqueness of hopping upon one foot.

"Now go back to your sofa, and you may read a little, but remember! no work till I see you."

She obeyed him willingly; for she was weary; and was, moreover, much hurt and jarred by her fall. Toward night she fell asleep, and did not awake until morning. She was unable to go about much, even with the doctor's cane; but, fortunately, a little girl came in on an errand, and Kate begged her to get her mother's permission to stay with her until she should be able to walk about.

Through little Jenny's exertions, the room assumed its usual neatness. At noon the doctor made his appearance. Kate was

sitting up; her foot in a cushioned chair. It was doing well, Doctor Broderick said, and she would need no further attendance. "But I shall call occasionally," he added, "so that you shall not be too careless."

The next week he asked her to ride with him. She needed air, he said; and, as it was always his prescription for convalescents, she must not object. Into his amply robed sleigh, therefore, he lifted her, taking Jenny also; and the next hour found them stopping at the doctor's own home.

"My mother will be happy to see you, Miss Ashcroft," he said. "She is greatly interested in my patients, especially when they are as lonely as yourself."

And he carried her in his arms into an apartment, half office, half sitting-room, where a sweet-faced woman welcomed her with kindly warmth, to a seat beside the cheerful wood fire. The windows were full of the rarest plants. The walls were almost covered. Splendid roses and lilies were in bloom—geraniums and fuchsias were abundant, and the purple scented violets were the sweetest Kate had ever seen.

"They are Arthur's favorites, above all flowers," remarked Mrs. Broderick, as Kate eagerly took the cluster she gave her; "and I think they must be your favorites too, by the way you look at them."

They were indeed very dear to Kate, as the last flowers her mother held in her hands; and she told her new friend why she loved them so well.

"She is a little darling, Arthur," exclaimed Mrs. Broderick, when the doctor returned from taking Kate home. "I am going to send for her to stay a month with me. Do you think she will come?"

The doctor laughed.

"Not unless you tell her that you want her to sew for you, mother. She was hardly willing to call here, or even to ride with

me. If 'she is innocent as a dove,' she is also, as 'wise as a serpent,' and will not be beguiled into anything that will compromise her character."

"I like her better for that, Arthur. Very well—tell her I want a seamstress for several weeks, and will give extra prices for work. But don't you go to falling in love with her, Arthur!"

"Why not?"

"Because I shall get no work done, if you are hanging about the room."

"You are a dear, cross, good mother! What do you suppose I want to fall in love for, when I have you? Besides, you are such a proud old lady that I should not dare to fall in love with a sewing girl."

"Don't, Arthur. You make me feel faint. Remember I was a sewing girl; and I married a richer man than you are."

"Come, come, mother! I shall have to correct you, or put a mistress over you. How would you like that, little mother?"

"Hold your tongue, Arty! and, to-morrow, see that you go early after my sewing girl."

Doctor Arthur patted his mother's cheek, and kissed her fondly. "I am going now," he said. And truly he told Kate such a piteous tale of his mother's disappointment in losing her seamstress, that gratitude to him prompted her to go to her.

A month of happiness it was to Kate—so petted and caressed, so carefully tended, and finally, so beloved by mother and son.

"I don't know," said Mrs. Broderick, reflectively. "It is a serious thing to marry a wife only half your age, Arty."

"Nonsense, mother! I have made a bargain with this little girl. I have promised to give her ten years of my forty, and that makes a fair average of thirty years each. It will be a happy match, dear mother. Don't break it up with any of your objections."

And it *was*—and *is* a very happy match for both.

## MAYFLOWERS.

BY MRS. R. B. EDSON.

It was only the twentieth of April, but April is proverbially fickle, and this year was all smiles and sunshine, and wore the green with such an airy dainty grace, that even her old traducers fell in love with her, and forgot all the hard spiteful things they had said of her in other years, under the malign influence of agues and influenzas.

Now and then, through the soft sunny air, little peals of girlish laughter floated out from the long belt of sandy upland, where the resinous breath of pine buds mingled pleasantly with the delicate fragrance of the arbutus blossoms. Half a mile away the ocean flashed and paled its soft opalescent lights, and between, a broad level marsh of reedy sedge, showing faintly green through last year's dead and matted grasses. Stretching away from this, lightly rising and falling over the low hills, the yellow sanded road ran like an amber thread through the fresh velvety green-sward that bordered it.

Suddenly there was a light whirr of carriage wheels, softly muffled by the yielding sand, and then, coming round the bend by the belt of pineland, an open wagon appeared, just as a dozen or more of young girls of twelve or fourteen years, had emerged from the woods, their hands filled with daintily-flushed blossoms, and long sprays of the running lycopodium (ground pine) wound fantastically about their shoulders and waists.

The girls drew back a little, and huddled together like a group of startled birds, casting little furtive fluttering glances at the wagon and its occupants.

"Wood-nymphs, by all that's wonderful!" cried a gay bold voice, ending in a laugh. "See here, Jehu, haul up a little, will you? Just curb your 'fiery steed' a minute, I want some of those blossoms."

The driver, a tall, awkward, overgrown boy of sixteen, in a rather dilapidated coat and trousers of gray eatinet, and a hat whose crown and rim had nearly concluded to part company, instead of complying with the request, gave the horse a sharp cut with the whip across the ears, which had the effect of startling that sober steed into a

shambling ungraceful canter—a no small feat considering the very conservative character of the animal.

"I say, here, just stop that trick, my gallant charioteer," cried the first speaker, seizing the reins and drawing in the all too willing horse, and then springing to the ground.

There was a little volley of exclamations and laughter, and then the five others followed his example, and sprang out also, leaving Basil Webster, the driver, sadly in the minority on the affirmative side of the question—to go, or not to go.

The passengers that had alighted from the wagon were nice-looking, well-dressed young fellows—incipient young gentlemen of the rapid school, whose future one might tell by any score of the full-grown specimen of that delectable class. A dozen miles inland was a flourishing academy, where these boys were fitting themselves for—what? As they had the most vague ideas imaginable on the subject, it is useless for me to try to solve the problem. This morning they had voted unanimously that it was "too dem'd fine weather to be mewed up in that old rookery," and accordingly had made a bolt for the train when it came along; and here they were, fully resolved to "make a day of it, since they were in for trouble anyway, when they got back." At the depot, a mile and a half back, they had chartered this rather primitive-looking team to take them to the shore, also engaging the driver of said team—who, by the way, matched it admirably—to take them out in a dory to fish for tautog.

"Now, boys," said Alfred Chesley, the spokesman and leader of the party, speaking in a lower tone, "each of you pick out one of these charming dryads, and see who'll get the finest bouquet of Mayflowers to wear back in his button hole. You see that tall slender girl with the brown curls, and a bunch of flowers in her belt? Well, I'm going to have those. Now come on, and I'll introduce you to the 'Unsophisticated.'"

The group of girls fell back a little, laughing among themselves after the manner of

all young misses in like circumstances, and looking half pleased, yet acting ridiculously shy. All but one, and that the girl designated by young Chesley, who wore the flowers in her belt. She stood erect, her fresh face a little pale, but an angry light in her great gray eyes.

"Don't mind them, girls," she said, hurriedly; "it is rude and impertinent in them to stop, and to address us in this way. I don't care if the driver does look shabby, he is much more of a gentleman, for he would have gone by quietly, if he could have had his way."

"I presume, young ladies, you are the gentils of the woods," said Chesley, approaching with mock gravity and uncovered head. "Allow me to present my companions and myself as your adoring slaves, asking no higher honor than the pleasure of wearing your colors—the beautiful blossoms plucked by those fair hands."

"Bravo, Chesley!" his companions cried, applaudingly; and the girls giggled as young girls only can.

"Do you know my happiness depends on my becoming the proud possessor of the flowers you wear in your belt?" Chesley asked, with an air of jaunty assurance, stepping up to the tall girl with the brown curls, and whose name was Marian Illsley. "If you're half as kind as you are pretty, you will give them to me at once. I don't care for their Mayflowers," he said, in a low meaning tone, and with an accent and look that would have been creditable to a much more advanced student in the fine art of flirting.

"I have no flowers to spare, sir," she said, firmly. "The woods are free, you can help yourself." And she turned to walk away.

He put out his hand and caught her arm.

"O, but I want these." And as quick as lightning he put an arm about her waist, and drawing her to him, caught the flowers from their fastening. "I shall tell the boys you gave them to me, my pretty little prude," he whispered, triumphantly.

"Indeed you will not?" she cried, her cheeks and eyes flaming. "If I am to lose the flowers, a gentleman shall have them." And catching them from his hand she ran forward a step or two, and tossed them into the wagon to Basil Webster, who caught them awkwardly, and blushed scarlet under the shower of laughter which was raised by both boys and girls.

"I admire your taste in the matter of gentlemen," Chesley retorted, with strong symptoms of anger in his face and voice. "The bouquet will become that jacket, most certainly."

"A jacket is easier changed than manners," she answered quickly, and involuntarily glancing up to see if the bouquet was in his jacket. But no, it was nowhere to be seen; but instead, she encountered a look of such simple honest gratitude and admiration that she cried out impulsively;

"You will keep them as a reminder that every one doesn't judge a gentleman by his clothing or business, will you not?"

"Thank you, miss, I will, and as long as I live," he replied soberly, a sudden fire kindling in his large dark eyes.

"There's devotion for you!" sneered Chesley.

"If you are going with me you must go now," said the shabby driver, quietly, but very firmly.

There was a moment of laughter and dallying, and then the six runaway students clambered into the long dingy-green wagon, each one with the coveted bunch of Mayflowers, for one of the other girls had taken pity on Chesley and offered him a part of hers, which were received rather ungraciously, as most all things are which are given without the asking.

"You are the oddest girl, Marian Illsley, I ever saw," said Sue Lester, the girl who had given her Mayflowers to Chesley. "I think it was real splendid, their stopping here so." And she, with two or three others, waved their handkerchiefs in reply to the same signal from the students, now almost out of sight down the sandy road.

"It was a piece of impertinence, and they didn't get any of my flowers, and wouldn't if I'd had to eat them!" was the spirited reply.

"That was Basil Webster, girls, did you know it? The driver, I mean," said one of the smaller girls, who hadn't been much noticed.

"Are you sure, Carry?" asked Marian, eagerly.

"O yes; I was at the hotel with papa at the time Mr. Denslow was brought in insensible. I never was so frightened in my life, and everybody thought Basil would be killed, sure; and papa ran out with an axe, and somebody got a gun, and it wouldn't go, and then—"

"O Carry Dean, tell us all about it, from the beginning," interrupted two or three in one breath. "And the dog was really mad?"

"I guess so!" Why it was terrible to see the foam drop from his jaws, and to see him writhe and bound about. You know 'twas Mr. Denslow's dog, and the people told him they thought something was wrong about him, and wanted him to tie him up. But he was, papa said, one of those people who never will do a thing if they want to if they think any one desires them to do it, and so he let him run. He was out in the stable-yard with his master, when all at once he ran round the yard once or twice, and then sprang with a sharp fierce cry, straight at the throat of Mr. Denslow. He threw him off twice, and then he caught his hand, and would have stripped the flesh off in another instant, every one said, if Basil Webster hadn't come out just then and caught him by the back of the neck and forced him to let go. Mr. Denslow staggered back a few steps and fainted, and some one brought him into the ladies' parlor. And all this time Basil was holding to the back of the dog's neck with both hands, and everybody said he *couldn't* hold him but a few minutes so, and nobody dared go to help him—though he had come to help Mr. Denslow; and the ladies hid their faces, and said he would be torn to pieces by the maddened brute, and some of them cried, and O, it was dreadful!" And the young narrator shuddered and grew pale at the fearful recollection. "Then, all at once, there was a pistol shot, and then a great cry, and when I dared look out, the dog was lying on his side, dead. And Basil wouldn't come in the parlor, though they wanted he should, but just went back about his work as if nothing had happened, though papa said his lips were white as death, after the danger was over."

"And he saved Mr. Denslow's life—and he was a rich man—and then he went away and left him to starve, or next door to it!" said Marian Illsley, indignantly. "I don't think it would have been so very much of a pity if Basil Webster had let the dog alone."

"O Marian!"

"Well, I do not. Where did Mr. Denslow go? Didn't he bring the boy here?—or how came he here?"

"O his mother died and left him when

he was only six years old. She was a Spanish woman, and that is where Basil gets his beautiful black eyes and proud spirit, Mr. Burdett told papa. You see she came to Mr. Burdett's one summer, and begged them to give her a chance to work for a home for herself and child. But she was taken sick the very next week, and died, and no one knows anything more about them. Basil has been a slave to Mr. Burdett, papa says," Carry Deane concluded.

One day about a week later, Mr. Charles Illsley chanced to remark carelessly to his wife, at the tea-table:

"That boy who has been living at Burdett's—Webster, I believe his name is—is missing, they say."

"Missing!" Mrs. Illsley exclaimed. And Marian caught her breath sharply, and cried out, "O papa!"

"O, there's nothing to be alarmed at," he replied, laughing at their startled looks. "The boy ran away very deliberately. I cannot say as I much blame him; he never would be anything but a lackey, if he stayed at Burdett's forever. There is more than one who believes there's the foundation in him for a smart man. You remember the mad dog affair? He's got nerve and courage, anyway."

And that was the last Seaville heard of Basil Webster, and as the months and years went by, it nearly forgot him, so easily do the waters of oblivion close over the absent.

There had been some very important changes in Seaville. The town itself bore but little resemblance to the quiet seaside town it was ten years before. The rage for new watering-places, and places of summer resort, had found out the rare natural beauties of Seaville, and an enterprising individual erected a magnificent hotel, and advertised it extensively in the newspapers, the result of which was that "Seaville House" was overrun with guests, and the proprietor's pockets with dollars. Some nice houses went up, and streets were named, a town hall was built, and Seaville took a new lease of life.

Of the dozen girls who gathered Mayflowers together that sunny April morning, ten years ago, only two still remained in Seaville—Marian Illsley and Sue Lester. Five are married, two dead, one a teacher in the West, and one, alas! whose name is seldom spoken among them, and then in a tone of

pretty, delicately-nurtured Carry Deane, the youngest of the twelve, has gone to India as a missionary. Reverses overtook the Deanes. The loss of fortune was followed by loss of reason, and one sad day Mr. Deane took his own life and that of his wife. Carry had one brother, a prodigal, who spent his money in riotous living, and like the one in Scripture, had come now to the husks and swine.

Everybody prophesied that Carry Deane would sink down utterly under this accumulated weight of sorrows. She had been petted, shielded from all care and hardness, and was "like a lily broken by a sudden storm," people said, wondering what the pretty, delicate, helpless little girl could do. But to everybody's defeat and amazement, this "helpless" girl developed a strength of mind, and heart, and will, that no one but a woman—and oftenest a delicate fragile woman—ever does. She attended personally to all business affairs in a calm quiet way, and when everything was settled, quietly announced her intention to enter the arduous field of mission labor in India. When Marian Illsley remonstrated with her, she answered, softly, a sudden light breaking through the tremulous shadows on her sweet pale face:

"It is my work, dear Marian; He calls me, and I must go. I do not shrink from this life—I am not afraid, for I know in whom I trust, and I know that he who has carried me through the darkness, will be with me in the dawn. I am so glad to go, dear Marian; the way looks beautiful to me!"

And so she went, and Seaville was astonished for a little season, and then in the hurry and excitement of increasing prosperity, nearly forgot about it.

As Seaville had enlarged its "phylacteries," it had naturally run seaward. The long yellow road lay no longer like an amber thread through still, dewy, birch-bordered highways, but was properly graded, and every particle of greensward utterly exterminated from it. And the softly rising hills were crowned with cottages, with more pretentious residences here and there, and the simple country road, rising and falling over the low hills, was now a straight, hard, even highway, and rejoiced in the name of Ocean Street. So much for the genius of modern improvement.

Among the new acquisitions to Seaville

were the Chesleys. They were rather aristocratic people, though Mr. Chesley, it was reported, made a large part of his fortune while still confined to the primitive style of signing his name by mark. He wrote his name, now, however, but not much else. Possibly he could if he tried, but he didn't incline to letters; he could make money without, and so what was the use? Mrs. Chesley had—to reverse the well-known saying—seen *worse* days. But she had forgotten the fact long ago. It wasn't pleasant to remember the little one-story house in a dirty street, odorous with soap suds from Monday morning till Saturday night; nor the coarse, profane, rowdyish fellows who smoked clay pipes in the house, and drank themselves insensible regularly every Saturday night. And so Mrs. Chesley forgot it as absolutely as if it had never been, and had a very proper horror of all "low" people, and when one of her brothers lay dying in the almshouse of her native town, and the overseer—at the poor fellow's request—wrote to her that he could live but a few days, and implored her to come and see him, she was highly indignant at his presumption, and took no further notice of it. What, pray, had she in common with such people, now? He was only a pauper, and not a gentlemanly one at that. He was rude and uncultivated, and very far from a saint besides. And to crown all his previous misdeeds, he one day got into a street brawl; three or four brutal fellows, some of his own associates, had got a poor crippled half foolish girl into their hands, and were abusing her with all manner of indignities, when he chanced along, and with a fierce oath sprang in among them and rescued the girl, and carried her, terrified and half fainting, to her mother's door, which, by the way, was a poor little hovel in an obscure street, but the abode of purity and virtue, nevertheless. In the melee he got his arm broken, and one ankle dislocated, and as he had but little care, and that none of the best, the result was that he lost both foot and arm, and went to the almshouse for the rest of his miserable life. What, pray, *could* the stylish and aristocratic Mrs. Benjamin Chesley have to say to such a fellow as that? One can't be expected to countenance such people, if they do happen to be relatives.

But I mentioned the Chesleys particularly on the son's account—Mr. Alfred Ches-

ley, gentleman. Not that there is anything uncommon about this young man, or that he is deserving of any special prominence, for he is not. There was nothing particularly noticeable about him save his rather handsome bold face and his faultlessly attired person. I believe, however, he was reported a famous ladies' man, and quite *au fait* in society manners and graces. Nevertheless, he was a bachelor at twenty-nine, and of course a great acquisition to Seaville in its improved state. He had never any disagreeable business (his father said, proudly, that there was "no need of his boy's working"), to prevent his acting as cavalier to the ladies, and this fact made him invaluable—this, and his easy assured manners, and his talent for making gallant little speeches "under the rose" to all ladies, married and single, indiscriminately, who chanced to be pretty.

I have alluded to the changes in Seaville, but one place still remained "unimproved." I refer to the narrow belt of pineland overlooking the marshes. Save that it was a little denser, and the sombre green plumes a little nearer the sky, this place looked substantially the same that it did ten years ago. And, as if to aid in the impression, the soft clear air of this April morning, echoed gay voices and laughter coming up from the fresh odorous wood, even as that other one had done, ten years before.

But this year the season was later, and it was the thirtieth, instead of the twentieth of April; and the voices and laughter sounded more mature, and the glimpses one now and then got of the flower-seekers showed daintily gotten up toilets, albeit they were considered simple *neglige* by the fair wearers. And now, as then, they came out presently, loaded with fragrant clusters of arbutus, whose delicate rose-flush vied with the roses in their cheeks.

"Marian," said Sue Lester, in an undertone, "do you remember the first time we ever saw Alfred Chesley?"

"Yes, and the Mayflowers you gave him," Marian replied, laughing.

Sue blushed and cast a quick look toward him, as if half afraid he had heard.

"I don't think he remembers," she whispered, "do you? Did he ever allude to it in any way, to you?"

"No, not directly, but I know he remembers it," Marian returned, smiling dreamily; "I wonder if Basil Webster does."

"And if," interrupted Sue, "he keeps your Mayflowers yet?"

"O nonsense! we were all children then, and maybe he is dead—ten years is a long time."

"O yes, one might die in half that time, I dare say," was the ludicrously solemn-voiced reply.

"Girls," called out one a little behind the others, "I have just this instant thought to tell you a piece of news. We are likely to have a lion at our May-party to-morrow night. Some sort of a literary man—orator, poet, journalist, etc., etc."

"O, it's Denslow, isn't it?" asked Alfred Chesley, carelessly. "Some one said he was coming to visit the Aldens; those people who have moved into the little gothic cottage on the side of Beech Hill."

"Do you know him, Mr. Chesley?" Marian asked, looking round.

"Not personally. He writes well, and is a brilliant speaker, I have heard. I dare say he is as disagreeable as other brilliant literary people in private."

"I do not believe any one who could write such a poem as 'Endeavor,' could be very disagreeable," she replied, quickly. "I felt like a very miserable 'cumberer of the ground,' after reading those earnest stirring words."

"Probably Mr. Denslow had been taught by experience. I have heard, somehow, that he was a poor boy whom somebody adopted, or something of that sort," he replied, carelessly, and the subject was dropped.

The party proceeded to the town hall after this, and others came in with evergreens, and all day long a score or two of busy hands fashioned wreaths and garlands, and festooned the walls, and draped lamps and windows, and altogether made the pretty hall look like a greenwood bower. The next day, the Mayflowers, arranged in bouquets, and crosses, and harps, were brought over, and with a dozen handsome greenhouse plants, and a bouquet of tea-roses and heliotrope, the hall looked, as everybody declared, "perfectly splendid." A very original description, by the way.

I do not propose to give a description of toilets, after the style of modern "society reporters," as edifying as that sort of writing unquestionably is, but will simply say that there was the usual amount of crimps, and curls, and white shoulders, and



fronches, and overshirts, and paniers, and sashes, and all the rest of the means and appliances that go to make up a modern "dressed" lady, at the Seaville May party.

Marian Illsley's dress of green *moire* was ornamented only with white lace, and a cluster of Mayflowers in the corsage, and a wreath of the same woven with smilax, twined among her brown curls. Somehow, she felt nervously anxious to see Mr. Denslow, but when he came in, rather late, and sat down quietly with Robert Alden, a little aside from the rest, she grew suddenly pale, and went into the dressing-room and sat down a few minutes. She had sometime known that Alfred Chesley paid her more attention than he did any other lady, but this evening it annoyed her, which it had not done before. He was elegant, graceful in speech and manners, and it had been a vague sort of a delight to accept little flattering attentions from him, not giving them any deeper meaning than the pleasure of the moment. But to-night everything seemed to throw them together, and once or twice she caught an angry glitter in Sue Lester's eyes. She knew—and so did nearly every one in Seaville—that Sue was very much interested in Chesley, and—the gentleman knew it himself—alas!

By-and-by, greatly to her relief, Chesley went out, and she ventured to glance up at Mr. Alden and his friend. To her annoyance they were both looking directly towards her, and very evidently speaking of her, for at almost the moment she looked up, they both rose and came straight toward the open window where she was sitting. She saw them all the time, though she made a feint of interest in a conversation going on near her, until Mr. Alden touched her dress lightly. There was the usual formal introduction, and Marian found herself talking to Mr. Denslow, and all the time with a strange sensation, as if she was the subject of some curious nightmare, from which she should awake by-and-by.

Then she found herself going down to supper with this Mr. Denslow, and all the time with this strange, unreal feeling which made her, it seemed to herself, dizzy and faint. She bore it as long as she could, and then, when an opportunity offered, she said, looking straight in the handsome black eyes:

"You are Basil Webster, I knew you, instantly."

His face lighted, and a rare pleased smile softened the firm lips.

"And I knew you, Miss Illsley, just as quickly," he said.

"But why do you masquerade?" she asked.

"Perhaps because no one in Seaville believed in Basil Webster," he said, with apparent carelessness, yet watching her face closely.

"I did, at least," she said, impulsively, and then colored hotly.

"There is no need for you to remind me of that—I have never forgotten it for an hour," he replied, gravely. "There were so few who did, however, that possibly I might be pardoned a little masquerading if I had a taste for it, which, unfortunately, I have not. My legal name is now Basil Denslow, the name of the gentleman who helped make me what I am—if I am anything."

There was no more chance for carrying on the conversation then, but just as the party was breaking up, they stood together a moment in the doorway of the hall.

"Do you know how these Mayflowers bring back the past to me?" he asked, in a low quick way.

"It was a little thing to remember," she said, gently.

"It was a good deal to me. I have those blossoms yet; they are one of my inspirations."

Alfred Chesley came out of one of the ante-rooms, just then, and Mr. Denslow joined his friend and went out.

A little to Marian's surprise, she found the Chesley carriage in waiting when she got out upon the steps.

"You will ride home, Marian?" Alfred asked, in a low voice, close at her side.

It would seem rude to refuse, and so she suffered him to hand her in, and then the carriage rolled away with them. Before she reached home, she learned why he had taken this trouble, but to this question she did not so quietly acquiesce.

"You've fallen in love with this Denslow," he said, angrily; "any one could see that, to-night."

She kept silent a moment, and then she said, quietly, with a touch of cool scorn in her voice:

"I believe I chose between you once before, ten years ago. I was a better judge

than I thought, of the characteristics of a gentleman."

"What do you mean?" he demanded, sharply.

"Only that Mr. Denslow is Basil Webster, your quondam driver of the morning you ran away from the academy—you remember?"

"I don't believe it," he exclaimed, hotly.

"It is quite immaterial."

"Upon my word, this is romantic! Is it all settled?" he asked, sneeringly.

"Mr. Chesley, you forget yourself," she said, with quiet dignity.

Whereupon he relapsed into sullen silence till they reached Mr. Illsley's door, and then he merely said, "good-night," very stiffly, and springing back into the carriage, slammed the door savagely.

Before the week was out, Basil Denslow's identity was known all over Seaville, and though how it might have been had he come back poor, I cannot safely say, but with Mr. Denslow's ample fortune, added to his rising fame, he was safe against the petty spite of the Chesleys, the more, perhaps, because it was quite easy guessing the cause of their ill-feeling, especially when Mr. Denslow became such a constant visitor at Mr. Illsley's.

It proved that Mr. Denslow—the elder—had not been so indifferent to the boy who had saved his life from the furious attack of the maddened brute, as people supposed. He had found a school and pleasant home for him in another State, had written to him

to come on, which was the secret of his sudden disappearance from Seaville, though he said he had just come to the determination to leave, and try fate and fortune alone, when the letter came.

After paying his board and schooling four years, Mr. Denslow crowned the measure of his gratitude and generosity by leaving him, by will at death, all his fortune upon condition that he adopt his own surname, which he very willingly and gratefully did.

One day Mr. Basil Denslow brought a lovely little box up to Mr. Illsley's, telling Marian there was something in it he wished to show her. She opened it eagerly—it was fastened with a tiny golden key—and lo! on a piece of crimson velvet, reposed a bunch of withered Mayflowers.

"O, I thought it was something costly and valuable," she cried, with a sudden blush.

"And so it is—because of the giver," he said, softly.

A week or two afterward, Sue Lester met Alfred Chesley.

"Marian Illsley and Mr. Denslow are to be married next week," she said, a little exultingly.

"Ah!" with a slight start. "Then you and I will be married this week, Sue. Miss Illsley cannot get far ahead of me I fancy."

And sure enough, they *were* married that week.

"It is the old story of the Mayflowers over again," Marian said, laughing when she heard of it.

## "MIGNON."

BY BLANCHE SHAW.

ONE August afternoon a young girl sat on a rustic seat beneath the shade of Oakdale. She was slight and small, with a delicate pale face, and large dark eyes which looked steadily before her instead of at the knitting in her quick fingers. She was alone as far as human society was concerned; but the birds flew so close to her, and the grasshoppers chirped so loudly, that all feeling of solitude was banished. Presently another sound was added—a footstep; and then a gentleman appeared. He stopped before the girl, and raising his hat, said:

"I beg pardon, but may I ask if Mrs. Mortmain is at home?"

The girl turned her intense eyes towards the sound, and replied:

"No sir. She went to drive, and will not return till dinner. Will you wait for her?"

"Thank you, yes," he answered.

She rose to lead the way to the house, but he stopped her.

"Pardon me, but if you will permit me, I would rather wait here till my aunt returns."

"Your aunt?" And the large eyes looked at him questioningly. "Then I have the pleasure of addressing Mr. Oscar Mortmain?"

He bowed.

"The same, at your service. Am I wrong in calling you Miss Leigh?"

"Indeed you are giving me honor to which I have no right. My cousin Laura went with aunt to drive. My name is Page; a strange one to you, is it not?"

"It is; but I hope it will not be so long. It seems my aunt has prepared a double pleasure for me." He stopped abruptly as he saw Miss Page slowly extend her hand before her till it touched the chair she had just risen from, and then pass it quickly over it, before he sat down. Too wellbred to show his surprise, he took another seat and was silent, till she said:

"Aunt will be very sorry she was not here to welcome you, Mr. Mortmain, but she did not expect you till to-morrow."

"Yes, that was the day I appointed, I believe; but my friends tell me that I never kept an appointment in my life."

A ball of worsted fell from her lap and rolled to his feet. He picked it up and handed it to her. Her eyes were looking steadily at him, but she did not notice the wool. He drew it back, and said:

"Thank you, I will keep it in memory of our meeting." And without waiting for her to reply, he continued:

"To what lucky chance am I indebted for this pleasure, Miss Page? How could you be indifferent to the charms of a drive this delightful afternoon?"

A quick spasm of pain passed over her face, and then she replied:

"I would not be a very desirable companion on an excursion like the one they are taking this afternoon. It has pleased God to veil from me the visible beauty of his works." Her voice trembled, and her eyes grew deeper.

Mortmain drew his breath quickly. He looked at her a second, and then the truth burst on him. She was blind! A cold shiver ran over him; and had a third person appeared at that moment he would have said that his were the moister eyes of the two. He tried to say something; but no fitting thought would come at his bidding, and the silence lasted till Miss Page said:

"I feel that the sun is sinking lower. They will soon be home! Listen! Is not that the sound of wheels?"

Mortmain bent his ear, but heard nothing. She smiled.

"No, I suppose not. It is too faint for your ears. There! You can hear it now, can you not?"

He heard it, and in a few moments a carriage rolled up the avenue and Mrs. Mortmain alighted from it. She cast a look of uncertainty on her nephew, but in a second it changed to a smile of welcome.

"Oscar," she said, extending both hands, "is it indeed you? Welcome home once more! Why did you not tell me to expect you to-day? Have you been waiting long? I am so sorry!"

"Do not distress yourself, my dear aunt," replied Oscar; "I have been waiting but a short time, and Miss Page has entertained me delightfully."

"Lucy, ah, yes, I am very glad she was here. Laura, my dear." She turned to a tall auburn-haired girl, who had followed her from the carriage. "This is my nephew, Oscar Mortmain, Oscar, my niece, Miss Leigh."

Miss Leigh bent her pretty head, and Oscar responded:

"Miss Leigh has been an ideal friend so long that it is hard to realize I at last see her in the flesh."

Miss Leigh lifted her delicate brows.

"Please get accustomed to the fact as soon as possible, Mr. Mortmain. I have no ambition to be identified with the spiritual for some time yet."

"Consequently, you must know that it is nearly dinner time, Laura," said her aunt. "Come, Oscar, let us go to the house."

Oscar was late at dinner that day; not that he had not plenty of time for his toilet, but he loitered at it, pondering over the last few hours and Lucy Page. Who was she? His aunt's niece, he knew; but he had never heard her name before. Laura's praises had been chanted to him ever since she had graduated from pinafores, and he knew that he was expected, in the end, to dutifully fall in love with her and marry her. But Lucy! Her story was as sealed to him as the sunlight was to her sightless eyes. Ah! those eyes! So deep, so searching, and yet so soft. Could it be that all was black to them? Great heavens! it was terrible. And that evening, after listening faithfully for an hour to Laura's sweetest songs and Laura's most brilliant wit, he sauntered to his aunt's side to ask about Lucy.

"Lucy? Yes, poor dear child. We are all very fond of her. Her affliction is indeed terrible. She is my sister's child. A sister who married an artist, in opposition to all her family; he died in a few years, leaving her with one child, and very poor, of course. Poor Mary! her heart was broken. She soon followed him, and left her little blind girl to the care of her family. Lucy generally has lived with her uncle, but this summer I have asked her to stay with me for company for Laura. She is a queer child; solitary in her habits. But we all love her. Laura, dear, sing that last new song for Oscar; I know he will like it."

And thus with singing, and dancing, and boating, and fishing, the time rolled by, and Oscar saw but little of Lucy. He hovered around Laura constantly, and Mrs. Mortmain was congratulating herself that her darling wish would be gratified, when one day Oscar was brought home senseless and bleeding, in consequence of a fall from his horse. They laid him on his bed, and grave-faced doctors worked over him for hours be-

fore suspended life was restored; and then it broke forth in delirium. For ten days he hovered between life and death. His aunt and Lucy watched beside him, while Laura moped in the parlor, a useless mass of nerves and *ennui*. It was wonderful what instinct guided the blind girl in the sick chamber. It was her hand that arranged the phials on the little stand, her hand that gave the draught, and her voice that, when the sufferer was struggling with the fever, soothed him back to quiet. At last the change came, and the doctor said that Oscar Mortmain would live. He was weak and helpless as a babe, but reason was restored; and when the first ray of its light shone from his eyes, Lucy crept away "to rest," she said.

Oscar improved rapidly. He was soon able to don the inevitable wrapper, and occupy the easy-chair in the sunshine; and then Laura, suddenly all solicitude and interest, would sit by him and read; but Lucy still kept away.

"What has become of Miss Page?" he asked suddenly, one day.

Laura dropped her book.

"Lucy? Why, she's in the house somewhere, I guess."

"Why doesn't she ever come to see me?"

"I don't know. Probably she doesn't like invalids; you know they are not the most delightful companions."

"I wonder if one can remember what happens in delirium, or if I only dreamed it."

"Dreamed what?"

"That Miss Page watched over me during the first part of my illness?"

"No; you didn't dream that. She watched while you were delirious, but left you as soon as you became conscious. Shall I continue my reading, or are you tired?"

"Not at all. Please go on." And he leaned back and closed his eyes.

A week passed, and Oscar shed the wrapper and abdicated the armchair. A large reception was given by a friend. Oscar was not strong enough to attend, but he insisted upon his aunt and Laura's going, and at last they consented. Laura looked beautiful, that evening, and as Oscar handed her to the carriage he told himself a man might have a worse fate. He watched them drive down the avenue, and then went into the parlor. He took a book and sat down, but he did not feel like reading, and was carelessly turning over the leaves, when a light footfall sound-

ed, and looking up he saw Lucy enter. She advanced a few steps, and then feeling the magnetic influence of another presence, she stopped and half turned to go back, but Oscar said:

"Pray don't retire, Miss Page; rather take pity on my loneliness. Permit me to lead you to a seat." He went towards her.

"Thank you; no, I cannot stay."

"Can I get anything for you?" he asked, as she half turned, and then hesitated.

"No," she replied, with a half-sad smile, and then added, in a lighter tone, "we all have our 'blue' spells sometimes. To-night the spirit seized me, and I thought I would try to exorcise it with music. It is one of my follies."

"If that be folly, may I never be wise," replied he. "I, too, have a dark spirit to-night, Miss Page. Have pity on me." And he opened the piano.

"No, no, not that." And light as a shadow she glided across the room and seated herself at the harp. Oscar followed her, and watched with earnest eyes the little white hand sweep over the strings. A few sad chords floated through the room, and then, looking far beyond her with her sightless orbs, she sang "Mignon." The low echo died away, Oscar came and leaned on the harp.

"Miss Page"—those deep eyes were raised to his—"Miss Page, I have wished for a long time to thank you for your kindness during my illness."

"Pray do not, Mr. Mortmain, I did nothing worthy of thanks."

"But you did. You bore the burden of it all."

She smiled; this time a little bitterly.

"Is not that right? I was born for burdens."

Oscar spoke eagerly.

"Do not say that, Miss Page. You pain me deeply. It is not right. It cannot be right for you to bear so heavy a burden. When I see you going on so patiently day after day without a murmur, I want to put up my strong shoulders, to take part of the weight."

"Thank you, Mr. Mortmain, I am not worthy of such interest." Her face was white and weary.

"Miss Page, can it be that you are mortal? Do you never rebel against your cross?"

She looked at him. Her eyes sparkled now, and her cheeks flushed.

"Do I never rebel? Do you think, that because I bow to the inevitable, because I know that God does all for the best, that I can stifle all nature within me? That I can know the beauty of life around me, and not long for it? The wealth of love that is showered on other women, and not yearn for it? Rebel! Father, give me strength to conquer rebellion, and to endure!"

She rose quickly from the harp, and before he could speak a word, she was gone.

Summer fled, and the crimson tints of autumn began to glow. The party at Oakland was to separate on the morrow. Laura was to return home, and Mrs. Mortmain was to take Lucy back to her uncle. Oscar was still with them. His health was perfectly restored. He still played the devoted knight to Laura, but his heart and fortune was still his own. He, too, would go somewhere, on the morrow; but whither he would wend his way he had not stated. Laura fondly

hoped he would accompany her home to address her under her father's roof. The farewell dinner was over. Mrs. Mortmain was occupied by her last household duty, and Laura with her trunks. Oscar sat alone on the piazza wrapped in the smoke of a fragrant Havana. Suddenly the soft notes of the harp broke on the night air, and then a low voice sang "Mignon." Oscar rose and walked gently into the room. In the dusky light he saw Lucy at the harp. Her head was bowed, and he saw a tear glisten on her dress. Lower and more tremulous grew her voice, and when she uttered the last "Dahin, Dahin," she bent her head in her hands and sobbed. In a moment Oscar was at her side, and bending low over her he whispered;

"Will you indeed go with me, my darling?"

And Lucy rested her tired head on his strong shoulder, while over her darkness broke the golden light of love!

## MISS ANDERSON'S RIGHT HAND.

BY AMETHYST WAYNE.

### CHAPTER I.

"MURDER! murder! Help! O help!"

Such was the cry breaking sharply upon a scene of profound peace, rest and security.

The great round moon rode full and high in the clear blue of the sky, flooding the entranced earth with the wondrous light. Like a silver mirror lay the lakelet, scarce a ripple astir. Dark sweep of wood and broad stretch of pasture land, each mapped out in its own distinctness, were silent and peaceful, save now and then the hoarse trill of the frog, or the mournful cry of the whippoorwill. Across the lake rose the dark heights of hills, which were almost mountains, girding the horizon, and in the opening before them shone a golden speck of triple lights from the windows of Lakeville, as it was known in the neighborhood, a fine country-seat belonging to the great lady of the town, Miss Serena Anderson. The trees behind the house hid all signs of the town, which nestled below the rise of ground on which the mansion stood, in a sunny green valley. Only this feeble shimmer from the aristocratic windows gave sign of human vicinity to the lake, for, though on the bank opposite them stood a small rough building, a compound of cabin and hut, no light or sound evinced occupation.

The katydids, startled from a long pause, took up again their shrill eerie chattering, and then droned off into silence. Through the sounds of insect life, and murmuring frog notes, came steadily a faint muffled noise, as of even blows. Two woodmen, in a cart-track down amongst the woods, were taking advantage of the moonlight, and loading up their teams for an early start in the morning. Two honest, hard-working, simple-minded men, who found it perplexing enough to make both ends meet at the close of the year, and keep wife and children in decent comfort, without troubling their brains with any deeper problem.

They worked silently, not by any means because thrilled by the subtle solemn spell of that glorious moonlight, but because they were tired with their long day's fatigue, and

had long ago worked off the effervescence of their morning spirits.

Neatly and deftly, then, they transferred the clean white pine sticks from the great pile to their carts, and only paused, now and then, to wipe off the drops of perspiration, nor disturbed the tender hush of nature by their discordant speech.

But that hush was broken more sharply than by cry of bird or insect. Wild, hoarse, in the shrieking voice of deadly extremity, suddenly rang out that cry:

"Murder! murder! Help! help!"

Nat Wilson dropped the stick he held and faced about.

"My God, John! did you hear that?"

John Briggs had heard. His teeth were chattering as with the ague.

"What shall we do? O Lord, what shall we do?"

Nat Wilson stood with his head bent aside, listening with all his faculties. Nothing more; not another sound until the whippoorwill, startled, perhaps by the same sharp cry, trilled out sleepily his monotonous call again. No sound of crackling bush or dry limb, no rush of hasty steps.

"Let's go home, Nat," said his companion, feebly.

"I'm going to find out where that noise comes from," retorts Nat, sturdily, and hunts up the stoutest club from his woodpile. "Hark!"

What was it? a falling stone in the distance, or the muffled report of firearms? Neither could be sure, and in a moment more the faint echo died out.

"It's in the old hermit's cabin, John. I reckon there's trouble of some sort there. Come along, if you're a man, and see what fellow-creetur needs our help."

In no wise willing, but desperately afraid to be left alone, Briggs, who was an ardent coward, seized a stick in his turn, and crept along behind his companion.

Nat Wilson dashed ahead, with great powerful strides, but kept to the open spaces, and did not take the shorter path which led through the high bushes and in-

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dergrowth. He gained the door of the building, half cabin half hovel, which stood on the bank of the lakelet, opposite the lights twinkling across the water from Miss Anderson's stately mansion. It was open, and a broad rift of moonlight made a silver track across the roughly-boarded floor. Over that glistening path *what had come hither, and whither had it passed away?*

Even fearless Wilson hesitated on that threshold. The moonlight crossed the floor, and stopped at the foot of a narrow bench, rather than bed; but there was a fall of drapery over it, and a dark stirless length stretched upon it. The light through the open door, and two little squares of window-glass, showed the rest of the room, with its two roughly-fashioned chairs, its narrow table and tiny fireplace, in which one or two red coals still blinked through the gray ashes. The quiet and silence somehow reassured the explorers.

"Halloo, friend! did you call for help just now?" demanded Nat Wilson.

No answer, but the same utter stillness and apparent peaceful quiet.

Wilson strode forward, and laid his hand rather roughly on the speechless form. He drew it back with a great shudder, wet and slimy.

"My God, Briggs! here's foul play! Strike a match, in the name of mercy! If you haven't got one in your pocket, there might be some on the shelf there."

But Briggs had found his pipe and card of matches, for all his terrible fright. He struck it with desperate haste.

"There's a candle on the table. Here, let me have the matches. The Lord have mercy! it is as I thought! My hand is covered with blood—warm blood, too!"

"Then the murderer must be near by," gasped John Briggs, his teeth chattering and his coarse hair standing on end.

Wilson did not answer. He had lifted the wick of the candle, and, as it blazed up steadily, he took it over to the bench.

A ghastly horrible sight met their terrified eyes. There lay the wretched man covered with blood, his face horribly mangled, his mouth wide open, with protruding tongue, one eye lost from sight in a yawning wound, and the other rolled up in his head in a glassy stare.

Even stout-hearted Nat Wilson recoiled, and, hastily setting down the candle, retreated to the door. But it was not for

flight, only to get a breath of fresh air to take away the giddiness produced by that sickening sight.

"Briggs," said he, hoarsely, "we must get the village here as quick as we can. Whoever has done this is not far away. Plenty of hands could soon hunt up the murderer."

"—sh! How do you know but he is here, this very minute?" whispered Briggs, in a perfect panic of terror, his knees shaking, and his eyes rolling around the room.

"We'll soon decide that," answered his companion, clutching his club more savagely; and he walked around the room, opening the closet-door, and peering into every possible hiding-place, without avail.

Then he came back to the rude couch and closely examined the wound.

"He hasn't been dead many minutes, if he is really dead now. Run down to the village to Squire James, and rouse up the folks, Briggs. Don't be saving of your legs, either."

"No, no! I never'd dare to do it. How do I know who is hiding in the bushes?"

"Stay here, then, and I'll go myself. I'd have proposed that first, only I thought you would have liked the other better."

"No, indeed I won't. It isn't safe for either of us to be alone. Do you want another murder?"

"I aint so sure the poor creetur is dead, that's all. Only see how warm his flesh is!"

But Briggs only cast a shuddering glance toward the gory head. All the wealth of the village could not have tempted him to have touched the corpse, if corpse it was.

"Come along, Nat Wilson; the quicker we get away, the quicker there'll be help for him. It's after nine o'clock, and all the folks will be in bed."

Wilson reluctantly yielded. They left the candle burning, closed the door carefully, and went hurrying down to their teams. The patient horses were standing cropping lazily at the grass of the turf beneath them.

"Never mind the carts now," says Wilson, in the short stern tones of command, as he unhooks the traces, and leaps on his horse's back.

And down the cart-road, making a drowsy stir of bird and insect, they go cantering toward the village. An hour afterward the peaceful retirement of the scene is broken



up by trampling feet, and eager voices, and glimmering lanterns; group after group hurrying along, stumbling over stone and stick lying in the rude pathway, until the little room of the cabin is filled to overflowing.

Grave and dignified, the magistrate, Squire James, glances around upon the row of startled horrified faces.

"This is a foul deed, good friends and neighbors," says he; "let us, if possible, bring its dastardly perpetrator to justice. Search all around the cabin thoroughly, in the woods and the pastures adjoining. In the morning all the highways shall be followed up."

"Does any one know of any ill-will borne to the dead man yonder?" asked the coroner.

No one could tell a single instance. One and all had known him as a strange peculiar man; regarding his hermit habits, some with simple curiosity, and others with compassionate sympathy. He had so thoroughly avoided all acquaintance, it was scarcely likely he could make a friend or foe in the town during the ten months that he had occupied the cabin.

There was nothing among the simple relics left behind to throw any light upon the matter. The doctor, who had been carefully and thoroughly examining the corpse, gave his opinion that the man had died instantaneously from a ball through the brain, fired from a pistol in the hands of unknown parties.

The scouting parties, who had been out with lanterns, beating down the path to the nearest highway, and searching the bushes, came back, one by one, with as meagre reports. No trace of the murderer, no slightest clue. Only for the testimony of Wilson and Briggs, and the absence of any weapon, the coroner, and all the neighborhood, had been ready to believe the man had died by his own hand.

One by one the villagers came and stood over the ghastly figure. Few of them had seen the hermit near enough to be able to recognize his features. But they were so disfigured now, that Mat Wing the storekeeper, who had had the most intimate dealings with him, declared that he should never have believed it to be the same man.

It was nearly morning before the cabin was free from its crowd of visitors. Then two men were left to watch the corpse, and

the rest of the village returned home, to wonder and marvel. The Hermit of the Lake, who had been before a vague object of romantic interest, had now become the hero of a mysterious and terrible tragedy.

It was but a feeble-link the morning light brought to them. The sharp-eyed coroner found a shred of black silk caught in a splinter of the rude board doorway, and down by the bank of the lake, along the narrow strip of damp earth, was still the plain impression of a foot, slender and narrow, a woman's foot, unquestionably.

There had been plenty of women at the cabin during the excitement of the previous evening, but it was very soon ascertained that there were none in silk. And this was all the evidence obtained to convict the unknown murderer. The body was buried on a knoll, a little further to the right, and a wooden cross, painted white, marked the spot. A simple inscription told that an unknown hermit, whose very name could not be given, the victim of some foul assassin, slept there.

This cross, rising white and bold against a dark background of pines, became a remarkable object in the landscape. You could see it, whichever route you took across the lake, and from either of the lofty hills lying beyond. The servants said, likewise, that it was distinctly visible from the grand mansion at Lakeville, and that, when the mists hung between, it looked like a ghost, and seemed to be waving weird arms in threat or warning. And slowly the days slipped on into weeks, and weeks into months, and the excitement, for want of any material to feed upon, died out from the town. Not that it was forgotten, but no longer dwelt upon as a close and absorbing theme for consultation. The town had offered a moderate reward for the detection of the unknown murderer or murderers, but without the faintest expectation of its ever being called for. Austin Bradley the coroner, however, wrote down in his private journal an elaborate description of the whole affair. This was written the second day after the murder. Something like ten days afterward he took down the same book, and entered beneath it these brief jottings:

"June 28th, 185-. The night of the murder Amy Atherton came home late into the evening, evidently flurried and disturbed, a corner of her black silk apron torn, and a shred missing."

"On the same evening, June 28th, 185-, Charlie Creyton, the young cabinet-maker, was absent those same hours of the murder, and cautious inquiry proves that he was nowhere in the village, at any store, shop or dwelling-house. But one of the apprentices in the shop remembered his look of vexation and confusion, as he discovered a spray of oak caught in the button of his coat on the following morning. From which one would infer that he had been hurrying through tangled underbrush during the previous evening. It is noticeable that he was not among those who visited the hermit's cabin during the night, but manifested no great surprise when told of the tragedy, as he went to his shop the next morning."

"It is also beyond question that a boat crossed the lake that evening. The same slender footmarks were to be seen in the damp mould of the landing-place at River-ville, and the bottom of one of the skiffs was muddled by tracks of similar delicate proportions, made by a small foot which had been walking over some wet marshy ground. I found likewise, on the bush some distance below the cabin by the lake bank, a shred of cambric embroidery, torn from the bottom of a woman's petticoat, I should judge. And two days afterward, half buried in the mud, I discovered a gold piece of five dollars' value, perfectly new and bright, and of this very year's coinage. All of these evidences are carefully secured, and I keep my own counsel."

"(Later.) The hermit drew a large sum in just such gold at Watchester bank. I have indubitable proof."

## CHAPTER II.

MISS ANDERSON was the great lady of Cranstown, but Amy Atherton was the belle. A graceful willowy creature, with clear hazel eyes and glossy brown hair, and lips like the coral branch in vivid red, while the cheeks wore only the delicate pink which flushes the dainty petal of the sweet pea-blossom. She lived in a pretty cottage on the main street of the village, and was the only child of people certainly not in affluent circumstances, but who managed to keep up a genteel appearance and move in good society. Her father was the cashier of the town bank, and had held the office for many years, and settled himself as se-

curely in the position as if he had obtained a life lease of it.

Moreover, Miss Amy had expectations. Squire Edward Livingstone—the late owner of Lakeville, and stepbrother to Miss Anderson—an old bachelor of peculiar temperament and character, had taken a fancy to the sweet-faced, merry-voiced little Amy, and in his will, that will which devised his vast estate to the life use of his stepsister, bequeathed, in case the said stepsister died unmarried, or, having married, left no issue from said union, the whole great fortune to Amy, daughter of Graham Atherton, to have and to hold, herself and her heirs forever. There was another exceptional clause in the will, to be sure. But every one looked upon it as a dead letter. On the very day he died Squire Ned had roused up, and with vehement haste demanded a lawyer and the will, and added a codicil, revoking all he had previously devised, in case of his nephew, his own brother's child, George Livingstone, should he ever present himself, the said Livingstone having been reported and found dead on a California ranche. Should the report prove false, and George Livingstone appear, the whole property was given, as it rightfully belonged, to him and his heirs. Every one believed that Squire Livingstone's dream, which he told with gasping accents to the lawyer, as a vision of revelation showing him George terribly wronged, the victim of some evil plot, was simply the fancy of a feverish excited brain. Had there not come a letter directly from California, describing George Livingstone's person and his manner of death? Had he not always been a wild, roving, good-for-nothing fellow, likely to come only to an evil end? And so the codicil was set aside as a dead letter. Mr. Graham Atherton wished sincerely that the other claim were as easily put aside. But as the years went on—it was now six years since Squire Ned's death—and there was no sign of Miss Anderson's marrying, he drew a long breath of relief, and indulged his fatherly pride in picturing for the golden future of his beautiful daughter.

And so the pretty Amy grew up to maidenhood, a beauty and a prospective heiress. And no one disputed her claims as the belle of the town, almost the county.

But to go back to that memorable moonlight evening. Mrs. Atherton was sitting on the piazza, enjoying the coolness, and

resting the tired limbs which had been fulfilling double duty all day. She had entertained company at tea, and carried out successfully the two characters of mistress and servant. For, what they expended in outside show to keep up the appearances required by the family of a prospective heiress, poor Mrs. Atherton was obliged to save in internal comfort. To admit the truth, all the family economy fell upon her shoulders, or rather was wrested out of her bones. A little girl, whose help could be obtained cheaply, answered very well to admit visitors and answer Amy's call, but the hard work and drudgery fell upon the mistress; and the strain was the more severe because she still felt herself obliged to play likewise, at least, an attempt at fine lady. She must be nicely dressed for callers at such an hour in the day, although to accomplish this feat she must rise long before daybreak, and work steadily even after her sleepy eyes protested against the cruelty imposed upon them.

She sat there now, after her visitors had left her, every nerve throbbing with weariness, her mind irritated and nervous, her body thoroughly prostrated. Mr. Atherton, tranquilly reading his paper within the house, called out, presently:

"My dear—Mrs. Atherton, look here!"

With an indignant throb at her heart, remembering his easy indolent life at the bank, where, at least, work comes along orderly and peaceably, she calls out:

"I'm on the piazza. What do you want?"

"Come in here a minute, can't you? Do you expect I'm going to scream all my talk so the neighbors will hear?"

Mrs. Atherton stiffly and wearily rises, and drags herself into the sitting-room, to find him lying full length on the lounge, a cigar between his lips, the paper thrown down on the floor. His boots lying in the centre of the room, his hat on the table, and one glove on the floor, and one on the chair, a gray streak of cigar ashes on the carpet, marking his passage from the table to the lounge.

Sighing, Mrs. Atherton restores the divorced gloves to safe union, picks up the paper, and sets the boots in the closet, and then sinks down into the chair.

"What did you want, Graham?"

"I was going to tell you about seeing Miss Anderson to-day. I asked her over to dinner."

"To dinner—Miss Anderson? O dear!" ejaculated Mrs. Atherton, shuddering, as well she might, knowing what burdens the realization of the project would impose upon her.

"It seems to me you're mighty short tonight. I should think you'd be proud of the honor, Maria."

Poor Mrs. Atherton put her hand to her aching head.

"They cost so much, Graham," ventured she, meekly, "these dinners such as Miss Anderson is used to."

"We must save it out in something else, that's all. I suppose you'll admit that it behooves us to conciliate Miss Anderson. She was talking about Amy to-day. I tell you, Maria, it's a settled thing; she's as good as promised not to marry."

"Did she?" inquired Mrs. Atherton, brightening up. "O dear! I wish she'd give Amy a little now. It is such hard work to keep her well clothed out of the allowance you give me. She ought to have a new barege now. Her muslins, all but the white, are faded."

"I thought I gave you ten dollars to get a barege last week," demanded the lord and master, blustering a little from his lazy languor.

Mrs. Atherton winced, and her voice faltered as she replied:

"I know you did; but Amy took the money and went off to the store, and came home with a bundle of towelling and a brown muslin dress for me. She said she knew how often I had to wash out towels, because we had so few, and declared she wouldn't see me roasting in that thick merino any longer, nor scrubbing every day at my old gingham. She got some pink ribbons for herself, and said her white dress was good enough."

"Humph! when I give money for a certain object, I want it to go for that object. It's of more importance that she be nicely dressed than that you are. I wonder you can forget it."

Mrs. Atherton thought of the new suit fresh from the tailor's, and of the row upon row of comfortable garments hanging in his closet, and, recalling her own scanty wardrobe, felt her heart swell with indignation.

She knew very well what was Mr. Atherton's idea of economy. Not deprivation of choice cigars, or fresh dailies, or even stint in his regular glass of wine after din-

ner, nor in anything that concerned himself, or touched upon his comfort, O no! but in the kitchen, the help, in short, out of that hapless individual who served him as house-keeper, servant, seamstress, maid-of-all-work, with reward only of reluctantly doled pittance of food and clothing, and the poor honor of sitting at the head of his table and bearing his name.

All this swelled in the poor woman's heart, sending a hot tear to her eye, and a hard soundless sob to her throat. Hapless woman! She only bent her head, and answered this domestic tyrant (how many such does the world hold!) who passed in town for a generous, free, jovial fellow, rather taken in by a still, dumpy, sullen wife, in the meekest tone.

"It was all Amy's doing. I told her you would be angry. I don't know but they might change the dress at the store. I haven't touched it yet."

"Change it! of course they will—and be telling about how poverty-stricken we are getting, that there can't be but one dress bought at a time. That's as much sense as you have got, Maria. Keep your dress, and make the most of it. You'll want it if Miss Anderson comes to dinner. Mind that you have half a dozen courses, and in good shape."

Half a dozen courses, and her one pair of hands to execute! The poor woman could not trust her voice to answer, for fear she should burst into tears and break down entirely.

"And of course you'll make the ice-cream yourself, it is so much cheaper, and, if anything, better than Copeland's."

Mrs. Atherton made a movement toward the door, but was called back.

"I say, Maria, you haven't asked yet what day, nor how many are coming. I never did see such a woman! I want Amy to have her new dress to wear, and I'll buy it myself this time. Ray Dexter will be here, of course; Miss Anderson talked as if it was a settled thing, his marrying Amy, and if he's from some great family, as Lawyer Dexter declares, I don't know as she could do better. Anyway, it won't do to put Miss Anderson out. Hark! what's all that noise?"

The sound was from the street, of hurrying steps and eager voices; such evident excitement, that Mr. Atherton rose and went to the door, and from thence walked down

the avenue to the gate. He came hurrying back.

"Get my boots, Maria, quick, and my coat. Confound this dressing-gown! I'm going down back to the lake. There's been a murder. I shan't be home for a good while. Sit up till I come back."

"Hadh't you better take the key?" suggested, faintly, the weary woman.

"No. I hate to come poking around in the dark, and if you leave a light somebody might come to the door. Amy ought not to be out."

And dashing out of the house, he joined the crowd hurrying towards the hermit's hut.

Mrs. Atherton, shuddering, went out and locked all the doors carefully, and then came back and sat down in the rocking-chair. Her little maid went home at night, and she was all alone in the house. Tired, depressed, thoroughly prostrated, the poor woman presently extinguished the lamp, and sat there in the moonlight at the window, watching for her daughter.

Many painful and bitter thoughts kept her company. She went back over the sorrowful scenes of her married life, and remembered, as if it were some one quite aside from her own identity, the bright, eager-spirited, glad-hearted girl, who left her comfortable independence at school-teaching, to become the wife of the handsome young clerk at the bank.

"What fools girls will be!" murmured she. "O dear! if I thought it would be so with my Amy."

And then fell to weeping, the salt tears slipping down the thin cheeks, and dropping their mimic shower upon the clasped toil-hardened hands. She shook them off, and hastily wiped all trace of them from her face, when a quick light step came dashing up the walk, and a hurried hand shook the doorknob.

She opened the door as speedily as possible, and the graceful figure flitted through.

"In the dark, mother? Has father gone to bed?"

"No, dear. He's away toward the lake. There's something happened, and the men seemed all turning out."

While she spoke Mrs. Atherton relighted the lamp. Its rays showed her Amy's face, very pale; the eyes bright, but somehow with a restless constrained look that was not natural.

"Dear me, Amy! what is the matter? what has happened?" exclaimed she, apprehensively.

"You just told me you didn't know; I'm sure I can't tell you," answered Amy, turning away her face, over which a flush was creeping.

"Where have you been? Your father said you ought not to be out."

"I wish I hadn't gone!" exclaimed the girl, with a sudden fervor in her tone; and then she added, hastily: "It's so warm to-night! How long did the Sinclairs stay? Poor mother! I knew you were half dead with standing over that hot stove. I hope this is the last of my father's absurd invitations. He seems to think it a great honor for you to slave and work for such genteel people."

"O dear, Amy, the worst is to come. He's been and made up a dinner-party for Miss Anderson. Would you have believed it? And I'm to have six courses, and make the ice-cream myself."

The swelling voice said more than the words.

"It is shameful! it is infamous!" exclaimed Amy Atherton, stamping her little foot wrathfully. "He will laugh, and jest, and show off his gallantry, and enjoy every bit of it, and you will be worse than a slave, for a slave could stay in the kitchen, and rest a little, but you will have to smile, and seem at ease, and play the hostess. If that man was not my father—"

She stopped abruptly.

"O Amy," said the mother, reproachfully, through her bitter tears. "At any rate, he is a good father to you."

"I don't know," returned Amy, bitterly; "it is only because of his pride. Because there's a chance of that fortune; and he thinks if he keeps me delicate-looking, it will add to his gentility. I'd take it kinder for him to let me help you at your drudgery. And I *will* help you, mother. I'll tend to the desserts myself; and I'll baste the meats, and stuff the chickens, and all that. I'm done with shamming a fine lady. I'll learn how to take care of a house—a poor man's house. It's all folly to think of anything else. There's Miss Anderson, by no means an elderly woman, and still handsome, and with all that money. She will crash down father's hopes some day, and marry some one of the fine gentlemen who stand ready for such a chance. And I hope she will. I do from my heart!"

And Amy stamped her foot again, and her eyes flashed resolutely through proud tears.

"Why, Amy what has come over you?"

The girl's lip was beginning to tremble, and one white hand slipped into her pocket, but was drawn out as hastily as if it touched a serpent there.

"At least," murmured she, "there's a little comfort out of it, I can spend it quickly."

And with an evident effort she returned her hand to her pocket, and brought it forth a-glitter with gold.

"There, mother darling, that wont come amiss, I'm sure. We'll have Mrs. Hoar over to help at that hateful dinner-party."

And she dropped the shining coin into her mother's hand.

"Why, Amy child, where did you get all that? New coin, too, of this last coinage. Did it come from the bank? Did your father give you all that?"

"My father! no indeed; and if you are wise, you'll keep it out of his sight, or he'll make it stand you for the year's income. It is all to be spent for your comfort."

"But, my darling, I don't understand. Where did you get it?"

"I am not going to tell you, inquisitive little woman," answered Amy, playfully, but there was a nervous excitement in her manner. "I didn't murder nor steal for its miserable sake, and I earned it."

She could not repress a shudder, while she said it, and hurrying to the window, looked out, more to hide her own face, than to learn what was transpiring in the street.

"I'm sure if you earned it, I've nothing more to say. Dear knows it is welcome enough. But your father says you are to have a new dress for the dinner-party. You must save enough for that."

"Not a dime will I use of it. Let my father find the dress. It is right we should get what we can from him. That is all for you, mother, and it's all the comfort I get from it. Dear me, how hot it is to-night!"

Mrs. Atherton stooped down to kiss the troubled face.

"You are my own darling daughter. O Amy, what should I do if it wasn't for you?"

The girl's arms were twined closely around her neck.

"Dear mother, I'm ashamed to think how long I have yielded to father's wishes. I mean to brave them now, and bear my share of your burden. It makes me shudder to think how much there is which I cannot

help at all, and sets my blood all throbbing angrily. If I thought such a fate could come to me, I would cut off my hand before I would give it in marriage to the proudest gentleman in the land!"

The mother could not answer. What was there for her to say? But she folded her darling closer to her heart. Lying there, Amy whispered:

"Mother, I will never marry Ray Dexter, though Miss Anderson, and father, and all the world command it. He is just such another—handsome, showy, pleasing when it is for his interest to be, but at heart he is selfish, exacting, arrogant. I will not walk into the fire with my eyes open."

"O Amy, your father will be terribly angry." And Mrs. Atherton shivered already at the thought.

"I know it," answered Amy, "but I can't help it. However, there's time enough yet. I won't be vexed prematurely. I'll keep the peace while I can, but I've told you, darling mother, and that's a relief. There is father. Hide the gold, and I'll run off."

Mrs. Atherton hurried the money into her pocket, and went to the door. Amy scampered up stairs to her chamber, but it was a long time before she retired. She sat at the window, her hair hanging about her shoulders, her hands clasped, her eyes dilated with some freezing horror. Once she made a movement toward the bed, and then turned back with a shiver, murmuring:

"No, no. I cannot sleep, I dare not sleep. I shall only dream it over, see again that horrible, horrible wound, that protruding rolling eye. O, how I dread the morning! How can I hear them all talking about it, and seem indifferent? And if anything should happen, if any one should find the pistol, and Charlie should not hide it safely. O hateful, hateful gold! How could we be tempted there by it?"

Toward morning she crept into bed, numb and exhausted, and fell into a restless feverish sleep.

### CHAPTER III.

In a neat but unpretending house a little out of the village, on the highway leading to the metropolis, lived Madam Creyton, as she was called in the neighborhood, more by courtesy, won through her meek retiring ways, her wistful patient submission to a hard fate, than from any recognized claim

of her own. For Creyton was her maiden name, and she had a son who had never known a father. The house had been left her by her own father, who never held up his head again after his only daughter's disgrace had been made public in the town. And she had lived there alone with her son twenty-two years come Christmas.

There were some who could not forget the sweet innocent girl Mary Creyton had been, and who still persisted in declaring that some time the mystery which hung over her would be cleared away, and the shame with it. But these were but few. Alas, we are all prone to censure harshly! The majority of the townspeople looked upon her coldly. If there is any palliation, any excuse, said they, why does she not declare it?

But Mary Creyton never spoke. For the first year after her boy's birth, she was scarcely ever seen outside her home. Then her father's death brought her out before the pitiless eyes and the cold sneers of the world. Her face paled, her lips were firmly set, her eyes downcast, but she held her sobbing breath with stern heroism, and bore the funeral services without a sign of the inward agony. After that it was easier. It is always easier for once desperately facing the evil you dread. The years slipped away; the boy grew into a stout lad. She was obliged to mingle a little in the world, and she found presently that there came a sort of respect for her. People said, carelessly, but not unkindly, "The woman, at least, has led an exemplary life since, and she is modest and humble. What harm if we forget the past, and fling her a crumb of comfort?"

If she wore her cross, branding deeper and deeper into the smarting breast, she gave no sign of it beyond that wistful grieved drooping of the lips, and the white pallor which always rested on her face. And now that Charlie Creyton had grown into strong and handsome manhood, the way of the lonely woman was smoothed beneath her feet. The young man was a model son, a marvel indeed among his sex. I think you might have searched the town through, ay, and the State beside, and not found another man who would have borne this blight resting upon him in the generous manly fashion of Charlie Creyton. Not that it did not bite and sting when flung toward him in sneering look or from taunting tongue. But there was no resentment or anger in his

grief. Never an indignant look, an unflinching word, but always watchful tenderness, grateful affection toward his mother. Long-suffering and patient one! if the slight and coldness of the world laid the cross upon her, here was her crown—this bright, strong, tender youth, who lent his sturdy arm to support her, who gave his warm heart, his unswerving faith and confidence.

Mary Creyton was watching for her son when he came with hurried strides down the path which led across the pasture to the village, through the glorious light of that moonlight evening. She flitted out from under the apple tree against whose trunk she had been leaning, and he started as if he had received a blow.

"Why, mother, what are you doing out here in the dew?" he exclaimed, as soon as he recognized her.

"Watching for you, Charlie. It grew so late, at least so much later than your usual hour, that I was a little nervous. How you pant for breath! What made you run so swiftly?"

"Well, I suppose because I wanted to get home the quicker. I'm sure I should have put on a little more steam if I'd supposed you were waiting out here, foolish little mother!"

He took her hand, kissed it as tenderly and as respectfully as a knight might have saluted his lady's snowy fingers, and then, holding her close beside him, so close that, had the daylight shone upon them instead of that silvery radiance, she could not have seen his face, he asked, with a sudden fervor in his voice:

"Mother, have you been fretting about me, and did you pray, a little while back, for my safety from any harm?"

"I did, Charlie. Somehow a restless foreboding came across me, and I could only be calmed in that way."

"I knew it," returned Charlie Creyton, in a voice that quivered a little through all its solemnity, "I was sure of it. Mother darling, I think there came an answer to your prayer. I was nearly—just on the brink of a great trouble, and an unseen angel stepped between me and the threatening danger."

"Why, Charlie—dear Charlie," began the mother, fluttering on his broad breast like a wounded dove.

"Never mind, dear. I think it is safely over. Don't fret over me, mother. Why, how you are trembling!"

He drew her into the house and put her into the rocking-chair by the window, saying, gently yet firmly:

"There's no need of your fretting, mother, trust me."

"I do. O Charlie, I do! You are my stay, my staff, my precious blessing. Let me never think anything hard while I keep you and your love."

"Sometime, mother, we will both tell all our secrets. Until then we will trust and love each other. Now let us close the house and go to bed. It is late, and you were up early in the morning."

"But, Charlie, you have not had your supper to-night. There is a bit of cold chicken and some of your favorite jelly. I kept them warm a long time."

"I had a bite of luncheon at the shop. I don't think I care for anything to-night. Now let's fasten the door and put out the lights. I shan't need any myself. This glorious moon will light me to my chamber."

"How anxious he is to have the lights extinguished!" thought the mother, but she did not give expression by voice.

In a few moments longer both were safely in their chambers. Then it was Charlie Creyton took from his pocket a small pistol. He carried it to the window and examined it.

"It is a peculiar bullet, and the other one must be in the coroner's hands by morning. I'd best make a safe hiding-place for this fatal pistol. If it were discovered, it might make an awkward and unpleasant predicament."

He withdrew the remaining charge, and stowed the pistol carefully on the upper shelf of his closet. That done, he went again to the window and took out from his pocket a dozen and more pieces of money, gold, evidently, by the clear ring, as they clinked together. These also were put away in safety. Then Charlie Creyton sat down by the window, his head leaning on his hand, staring out into the moonlighted field beyond the house.

"They came so near upon us, it startles me to remember it. What if we had been discovered? Poor little Amy! I am sure her fluttering heart will scarcely be still to-night. It was a narrow escape. I dread to meet the news in the morning; so slight a circumstance may awaken suspicion."

There was still another silent watcher that night in Cranston, aside from those who kept guard in the lonely hermit hut be-

side the gory corpse. In her elegant dressing-room, Miss Serena Anderson sat at the oriel window, half buried in the falling draperies of lace and brocade, looking forth across the silvery sweep of water. Now and then, amidst the undulating green of the wooded banks opposite, she caught the glimmer of lanterns, like fireflies, flying hither and thither. The pale moonbeams falling full upon her showed a stern, and haughty, and still handsome face, the black eyes aflash with a singular blending of triumph and terror, the scarlet lips set in a grim resolute defiance, as of some opposing or threatening evil.

She bore her years wonderfully, this Serena Anderson, and was a magnificent woman who had been merely a passably pretty girl. There was a stately poise of the head, a Zenobia air of self-sustained power and dignity which was very imposing and impressive. The complexion was clear and colorless, unmarred by wrinkle or blemish; the features somewhat severe, but regular and symmetrical; the lips of a singularly vivid red, as if to atone for the pallor of the cheeks; the forehead a trifle lowering at the jetty eyebrows, but sweeping back high and full. Her eyes were not fine, though they were large and black as night; an unpleasant icy glitter overspread them, and made you shrink as if freezing beneath some uncanny spell. Although strangers were not apt to perceive this, from a habit she had of keeping the lids downcast, so that the glances came through two veiling fringes of jetty lashes. Her hair was magnificent! great dusky waves of lustrous blackness, coiled again and again in massive braids at the back of the stately head, and fastened there by an arrow of gold-tipped jet. She reached up her hand presently and took these down, as if their weight pained her, and slowly her white jewelled fingers untwined the braids and left the loose locks falling free, sweeping to her waist in burnished waves. Still her eyes never relinquished their watch of the opposite shore, and not till the last gleam had vanished did she leave her seat at the window. Then presently she rose and walked slowly into the centre of the room, to a marble slab supported by a bronze Atlas. She touched the silver bell with a firm untremulous finger, and in a moment or two a sleepy-looking French woman appeared.

"Bring lights, Felice. I think I have

been asleep in the window all this time, I am so numb and stiff. I won't be beguiled into such foolishness again, even by this glorious moonlight."

The girl brought a taper, and in a moment more a heavy gilt candelabra before a costly mirror had all its wax candles ablaze.

The light showed Miss Anderson in her white cashmere dressing-gown, with a crimson velvet mantle over her shoulders, and that long hair streaming about her, crisping, curling, scintillating, as if there were living creatures hiding in its silken meshes. She yawned, and walked across the room once or twice.

"To think I've been sleeping there all this time! Why, it is three hours and more since I dismissed you," exclaimed she, glancing toward a gem of a clock, imported from Paris especially to her order. "I took down my hair, it made my head ache. Twist it loosely under a net, Felice, and then bring me a glass of wine, and you may go for the night."

When the girl had obeyed her orders and courtesied her good-night, Miss Anderson rose and paced lightly to and fro. Those strange eyes burnt with an almost maniac lustre, and though her cheeks were ghastly, waxy white, the lips seemed deepening every moment in their vermilion tint.

Presently she came to a dead pause, and holding up her hand—her right hand, with its long slender fingers and soft white palm—she looked at it long and with feverish impatience.

"Bah!" said she, suddenly, those scarlet lips curling with a scornful smile, "what do I heed of idle superstitions! There is no stain upon it. It is a hand to shrink from no task necessary in self-defence. The law abides for human as well as brute. I will go to bed and sleep—ay, sleep in sweet security!"

But she did not immediately retire. She moved noiselessly to a heavy box, a costly affair, inlaid with ivory and gold, and taking a key from her pocket swung open the lid. The light leaped in, as if exultantly, and woke a rainbow blaze over the dainty velvet beds where nestled many a costly jewel, milky pearl, and burning ruby, emeralds holding the richest tints of fairy rings in their gleaming hearts, and scintillating diamonds. Miss Anderson swept her eye over these impatiently, and tumbled over golden bracelets and quaintly-fashioned



chains, with heedless hands, until she found a small locket. She took it, carried it closer to the light, and pressed the spring. It was the pictured face of a young and handsome man, on which the eyes fastened with a passionate look. She pressed her lips to the inanimate semblance with frantic fervor.

"O Ray, Ray it is for you!—anything, everything for you, Ray!"

A hot tear rolled through the black eyelash, and splashed upon the picture. With a mournful smile she closed the lid, and put the locket carefully away.

At that moment there was a sound of excited voices in the hall below. She turned her head and listened. The servants who had somehow happened to be all away, despatched on various errands, had evidently returned. In a moment there were hurrying steps on the stairs, and a timid knock at her door. Miss Anderson, with a steely glance, threw over her the velvet mantle and opened the door.

"O Miss Anderson!" burst forth Mrs. Ewing the housekeeper, "there's been terrible doings. The town is all up in excitement. That poor innocent hermit has been murdered, and they found him all wet with blood, stone dead."

Miss Anderson flung up her white hands, and gave a little shriek.

"Good heavens! Mrs. Ewing, how you frighten me; a murder in Cranstown?"

"Yes indeed, and right over on the other bank of the lake."

"Don't tell me another word to-night; I shall be so nervous. And there I was sleeping all the evening at my unfastened window, and nobody but Felice and that deaf old Thomas in the house. Positively, Mrs. Ewing, I can't retire without some one keeps guard. Who knows what wretch may be prowling around the grounds? Tell John he and the coachman must take turns in watching."

"Yes, Miss Anderson. I beg your pardon for coming to you. I ought to have waited till morning, but I was so full of terror—all the town is so astir."

"Horrible! Tell John they shall both have an extra week's pay for watching to-night. And take something to calm your own nerves, Mrs. Ewing. Good-night."

"Good-night." "What a kind-hearted mistress she is!" soliloquized Mrs. Ewing, as she clattered down stairs, making as much noise as possible to keep up her own courage.

[TO BE CONTINUED.]

## MISS BOWLESBY'S LEGACY.

BY N. P. DARLING.

"I DON'T know what I will do next," said Mr. Jerry Bilzmith, removing his cigar from his mouth. "I'm over head and ears in debt, and I've no "expectations" now, and I've no profession, and—well, really now, I don't believe I'm fitted to battle with the world, and I can't very well get out of it, unless I take the thing into my own hands and drive out of my own accord, and I *wont* do that. It wouldn't look well, and it wouldn't read well in the papers the next morning. To be sure, I shouldn't be troubled with the reading of it, but I have too much regard for the feelings of my fellow-men to give them the trouble of reading it either. No, by Hev-ing! I *wont* do that. I'll—well, I'll wait like—who was that jolly old chap in David Copperfield? ah! I remember—Micawber. Like him, I'll wait for something to turn up. Something will turn up, of course, it always does. It did with Micawber. He came out all right in the end;" and with this consoling reflection Mr. Bilzmith resumed his cigar.

Now Mr. Bilzmith was a very unfortunate young gentleman. In the first place, he had the misfortune to be the only son of his father, who, by the way, was wealthy, which made it still more unfortunate for Jerry, because there was no necessity for his doing anything to help himself. So he did nothing. Then his father died, and Jerry inherited the property; and I wish to inform you that he went right through that property, making, I think, the best time on record. But he was

left with great expectations in the persons of a bachelor uncle and a maiden aunt; and on those expectations he lived until his uncle died. Then he paid his debts, and made way with his second inheritance with neatness and despatch. Once more was he reduced to expectations, and on the strength of them ran into debt as usual. But this time he had reckoned without his host, or hostess, rather. Miss Julinah Bilzmith made a will, leaving the bulk of her property to charitable institutions. Twenty thousand dollars only was left in trust for the benefit of her nephew Jerry, and so tightly was it bound up, that he, poor fellow, could only use the interest of the same.

Miss Julinah made her will one day and died the next; and I think it was lucky that she did die just when she did, for had she lived another day, Jerry, who was her idol, would have persuaded her to destroy the will, and leave him sole heir.

But it was done, and Miss Julinah was dead, and Jerry was inconsolable. Thus we find him sitting alone in his room, bemoaning his sad fate and smoking.

Jerry's room was a real curiosity shop. Handsomely furnished at first, it had been gradually filling up with all manner of rare and costly articles, until there was hardly room left for the proprietor to turn around in it. There were no two chairs alike. A piano stood in one corner, a harp in another, and a violin (a real Cremona) rested on the

mantel, and yet Jerry could play on neither: one of these instruments. He had bought: the first because he considered it a very handsome piece of furniture, and because he had always thought he should learn to play sometime; and he had bought the second because a particular friend of his had informed him in confidence that it was the identical "harp that once through Tara's halls the soul of music shed." He didn't know Tara, but supposed he must have owned a sort of music hall like the one in Boston. But it was an elegant harp, and Miss Lalage Bowlesby could play it beautifully. Sometimes she even drew tears from Jerry's eyes, "albeit unused to the melting mood." Then he had paintings, scores of them. The walls were covered with them, and they were piled upon the piano, and upon the chairs, and everywhere else. They were all works of the highest art, Jerry said. He didn't pretend to know much about paintings himself, but these had been selected by a friend of his who was an artist. There was one thing, however, that Jerry didn't know, which was that the aforesaid artist had not only selected, but had painted every one of those beautiful pictures. How kind of him, to be sure! And besides these things already mentioned, there were guns, pistols, swords, cutlasses of various styles, ancient and modern, jewelled daggers, and last but not least in the line of weapons, a boarding-pike and a small brass howitzer. But I haven't told you half of what was in the room. In fact, it would have taken Jerry himself a week to have made out an inventory of his effects.

But to return to the proprietor himself. Mr. Bilzsmith had finished his cigar. Now, as he glanced around upon his effects a smile of satisfaction lighted his face. "I might have done worse," said he. "If necessary—and egad! I think it will be—I can sell off what I've got here, and then—why, hang it! then I'll get married. I believe that's what fellows do when they find they're fit for nothing else. And I *do* think that Lalage would have me. I only wish she had a few thousand—"

"Ah! he is in. Didn't you hear me knock, Jerry?"

"O—what—halloo! Why, how d'ye do, Tom? And Lalage, too. Glad to see you both. I was busy thinking—"

"Ha! ho! that is good, isn't it, Miss Bowlesby? The idea of Jerry Bilzsmith think-

ing!" And Miss Bowlesby and Tom laughed in concert.

"Why, Tom, don't you suppose I ever think?"

"O yes, of course, after a fashion. But do tell us the subject of your thoughts."

"Let me find a chair for Miss Bowlesby first."

"Here's a camp-chair. The rest are already occupied. Mr. Tripp, you'll have to sit on the floor," said Lalage, opening the camp-chair.

"Sit on the floor and let my feet hang off?" cried Tom. "No, I'll try the table. O Jerry, if you want me to come to see you, you must have better accommodations. Why don't you sell off these works of the *old masters*, at least, what you can't hang up?"

Miss Bowlesby smiled at the mention of the old masters in connection with Jerry's pictures, and Tom Tripp grinned.

"I believe I shall sell part of 'em."

"Do, by all means!" cried Tom. "But, by the way, you were going to tell us what you were thinking of when we came in."

"Of myself, to be sure," replied Jerry.

"Not one thought of me?" asked Tom.

"No."

"Nor me?" said Lalage, with a smile.

"Yes, I *did* think of you."

"O! O Jerry! Jerry!" cried Tom. "Always thinking of the ladies when you are *not* thinking of Jerry Bilzsmith."

"I was only wishing for a song with a harp accompaniment."

"Then do let him have a song, Miss Bowlesby, if you can climb over this rubbish to the harp. Let me assist you."

"What shall the song be?" asked Lalage, after having reached the harp with Mr. Tripp's assistance.

"Something soothing."

"Yes, like Mrs. Winslow's syrup," said Tom.

"Art sad, Jerry?"

"Yes, very. My Aunt Julinah's will has broken my heart."

—"Wise men ne'er sit and wail their loss,  
But cheerily seek how to redress their harms,"  
quoted Lalage.

Then she sang, and Tom assisted with a very fair tenor. Jerry listened, meantime devouring Lalage with his eyes, and really, now, for a man with cannibalistic tendencies, she did look lovely enough to eat.

"Her brow was white and low, her cheeks' pure dye

Like twilight, rosy still with the set sun."

Her hair was golden; eyes blue and tender; skin smooth and white, and soft as satin; teeth of pearl, and lips like roses; neck built after the model of "Annie Laurie's," and a form as near perfection as they ever allow a female form to be now-a-days. In truth, my dear reader, if I wasn't a married man, I should have fallen in love with Lalage Bowlesby long ago.

Jerry Bilzmith was in love with her, but I don't think he knew it. He was certain that he liked her very much, and he was quite sure that if he married any woman he should want that woman to be Lalage Bowlesby. "If she only had a few thousand!" sighed Jerry. Well, she had, but the thousands were *too* few. However, she managed to live upon the interest of what she had, piecing out her rather scanty income by writing stories for the weekly papers.

The song was finished, and Lalage had retired to her own room. Tom Tripp remained.

"What the deuce am I to do?" asked Jerry. "I never *can* live upon twelve hundred dollars a year."

"But I do," said Tom, "and I don't know how to sympathize with a man that can't. I'll tell you what to do, Jerry. Marry Lalage—she loves you."

"What, and undertake to support two upon an income which I have just said was insufficient for myself alone? I'll tell you what, I'll marry an heiress; I swear it by the great horn spoon!"

"And leave Lalage to die of a broken heart?"

"Pshaw, Tom! women don't do that sort of thing now-a-days. Besides, there'd be a better chance for you if I was married, that is, if, as you say, she does care something for me."

He blushed, for he was jealous of Jerry, though he had striven not to show it. While Jerry was wealthy, he had felt that there was no hope for him; but now he considered himself a greater "catch" than Jerry, for he *could* earn a living, and he was working himself up in the world slowly but surely, while Jerry—why, he didn't work at all, but let things slide at a very rapid downward pace.

But just at this moment the bell rang, and Jerry and Tom went down to tea.

Jerry sat opposite Miss McKnight, a maiden lady of thirty-five. She was very ugly looking and very sarcastic, and she was in the habit of shooting her sharp-pointed arrows at poor Jerry; since the death of Juli-

nah, she had had so little respect for his feelings as to ask him quite frequently about his aunt's will. But to-night she was in a better mood, and greeted our hero with a smile. Jerry was good-natured too, and they sipped their tea and chatted in the most sociable manner. Lalage noticed it and wondered; and Tom saw it, and laughed inwardly, for he thought, "Well; why shouldn't he be sociable with her? He just told me that he was bound to marry an heiress, and here is Miss McKnight with plenty of money, and all in her own hands. To be sure, she isn't handsome, and she's rather aged, but of course he must expect to take the bitter with the sweet."

That evening Jerry spent in Miss McKnight's parlor, or room, which he had never entered before, and how they passed the time together is more than I know, but at ten o'clock, when Tom Tripp passed the door, he heard Miss McKnight reading "Maud Muller," and *thought* he heard Jerry snore.

Tom chuckled to himself as he passed on, but had he known that another pair of ears than his were listening, and another pair of eyes were watching for Jerry, perhaps he wouldn't have gone to bed in such extraordinarily good-humor with himself and everybody else. He might have wondered at a certain woman's infatuation, but he would have known why she had not been down in the public parlor where he had waited and wished for her the entire evening.

The next morning Jerry was going down to breakfast. It was late. The rest of the gentlemen had been gone down town an hour at least. "I'll just take a peep at Lalage," said he, tapping at her door. "I feel rather dry and husky after passing a whole evening with Miss McKnight, and a peep at Lalage will refresh me. I did have a pleasant nap, though, while she was reading poetry to me. Egad! if she hadn't been so deaf she must have heard me snore, for I know that it was my own trumpet that awakened me."

He knocked three times, but there was no answer. Just then little Miss Smith came tripping down stairs.

"Lalage has gone, Mr. Bilzmith."

"Gone! where?" And Jerry's countenance fell.

"To Bramleigh. She had a telegram this morning, and she had to go right away. Somebody's sick, I believe, or dying."

"And she didn't stop to bid a fellow goodbye," muttered Jerry, turning away.

"Why, you were fast asleep, Mr. Bilzmith; but as you feel so bad about a 'good-by,' let me inform you that there's somebody in the breakfast-room, sipping her coffee and waiting to bid you 'good-morning!'"

"Confound her!" muttered Jerry.

Miss Smith laughed and ran away.

"By George! I believe they're all laughing at me, and no wonder. But I won't see the McKnight any more. She's had her fling at me for some time, and last night I paid her off by playing the lover, though I was half a mind to marry her for her money. But, no, I haven't the courage to face her this morning. She might want a kiss—by the way, I did kiss her when we parted last night. Faugh! I can taste it now! No, not any McKnight for me, thank you. I'm off for Hull, where I'll bury myself for a fortnight. Good-by, Miss McKnight; parting is such sweet sorrow that I could say good-by until to-morrow."

Jerry was as good as his word. He went to Hull and staid a fortnight, without ever seeing one of his old friends. Then he returned to the city, but before going to his boarding-house, he thought it best to find out something about his friends there, particularly Miss McKnight, and so, as he walked up Waslington Street, he dropped into Harry Dobson's office.

"Ha! the anchorite hath returned," cried Harry.

"Yes; and now what news of the great world? I am famishing for news."

"Well, sir, after your villainous treatment of Miss McKnight, she first thought to go into a decline, and then she concluded to go to Long Branch, and there, my dear fellow, you can find her, if it is she you seek."

"Pshaw! what would I want of her?" cried Jerry.

"Why, Tommy Tripp told all the fellows that you were going to marry her—said he had it from your own lips."

"Confound him! where is he?"

"Gone to Saratoga—fortune-hunting, I suppose."

"What, Tom?"

"Yes, Tom. Lalage Bowiesby is there, and you know you always were sweet upon her. By the way, you didn't know that she'd stepped into a fortune?"

"What! Lalage? No. How?" cried Jerry, starting out of his chair.

"O, she had an uncle, same as you did, and he died the other day and left her a hundred thousand."

"Whew! you don't say so! Who told you?"  
"Old Bulger the lawyer."

"Then it must be so, for he knew all about her affairs. She used to go to him for advice, and he invested her money for her."

"O, it's so, you may be sure; and Tommy Tripp is just 'going' for that hundred thousand."

"Hope he may get it!" cried Jerry. "By-by, I'm off for Saratoga." And he left the office in a hurry.

"A hundred thousand dollars *does* make a woman attractive," muttered Dobson, as he turned to his ledger.

Four days afterwards Jerry met Lalage in Saratoga. Tom Tripp was beside her, and they were drinking that villanous water together.

"Lalage!"

"Why, Jerry! who'd have thought of seeing you?" But she blushed rosy red, and was too glad to see him to attempt to disguise it.

Poor Tom turned pale, and his voice faltered when he greeted his old friend, and then he turned away and sighed, "I'll go home. The game is up." And as no one took any notice of him, he slipped off to his hotel and began packing his trunk.

"Why did you run away from me, Lalage?" asked Jerry, still holding the hand she had given him at meeting.

"Run away! it was you that ran away, Jerry. When I came back from Bramleigh you had gone, no one knew whither. But why did you flirt so terribly with Miss McKnight?"

"O, don't ask me! I'm sure I got the worst of it," cried Jerry. "And I don't mean to flirt any more."

"Not flirt any more?" asked Lalage, with pleased surprise.

"No, I'm going to get married;" and Jerry looked very serious. "Yes, I'm going to get married—that is, if a certain woman will have me."

"O, by the way," cried she, looking around and seeing that Tom had gone, "I had a proposal last night."

"From whom, if I may ask?" And Jerry began to look blue around the lips.

"Why, from Tommy Tripp, to be sure. You knew he was an old lover of mine."

"But, good heavens! you didn't accept?"

"Why not? I always liked Tommy."

"Why—why," gasped Jerry, "I wanted you myself; and I thought you loved me."

"Well, and if I do?"

"Wont you be mine? You didn't say yes to Tom?"

"No."

"And you will say yes to me?"

She looked up into Jerry's eyes. Hers were just tender with love.

"Do you really want a wife, Jerry?"

"Yes."

"Then take me."

A fortnight afterward Mr. and Mrs. Jerry Bilzmith arrived in Boston. It was evening, and they drove directly to a hotel, where several of their friends were waiting to receive them. Dobson and his wife were there, and Tom. The latter had brought little Miss Smith with him, and upon her he seemed to be lavishing a great deal of genuine affection, and we will hope that it was requited.

Late in the evening Mr. Bulger dropped in; and he kissed Mrs. Bilzmith, in a fatherly sort of way, you know, and told Jerry he ought to be the happiest man in the world, as he presumed he was.

"And I am," said Jerry. "But, by the way, Mr. Bulger, can I have a few minutes' private conversation with you?"

"O, certainly, Mr. Bilzmith. We'll go into the next room. There's no one there."

They walked away arm in arm.

"We'll take a seat on this sofa," said Mr. Bulger; "and now, Mr. Bilzmith, what is it?"

"Well, you know I'm just married—"

"Exactly."

"And, well, really, I don't feel like speaking to my wife about her pecuniary affairs—"

"O no, of course not; quite natural, quite natural, Mr. Bilzmith."

"But still I—well, I should like to know something about 'em, and I dare say you can give me all the information I desire."

"I dare say I can, Mr. Bilzmith."

"Now, my wife's uncle died lately, and I've understood he left her considerable money. Somewhere about a hundred thousand."

"A hundred thousand! Let me see—a hundred thousand! O, ah, yes—yes—yes, he did. I'd forgotten, you see. Singular that I should, too. Yes, your information is correct; he *did* leave a hundred thousand. Who told you about it?"

"Dobson," answered Jerry, smiling sweetly.

"Dobson? O yes, to be sure. I intended that he should. You see, Mr. Bilzmith, I knew that Lalage loved you, and I knew that you loved her, and I wanted you two to marry, because I knew she never would be happy without you, and you never would be anything without her; and so I told that story—"

"What! Didn't her uncle leave her a hundred thousand?" cried Jerry, starting up.

"Yes—keep cool, my boy—he left her just *one hundred thousand cents!* which, according to my arithmetic, is precisely *one thousand dollars.*"

"O my prophetic soul! *her* uncle!" groaned Jerry.

"Was a very worthy man," said Mr. Bulger; "and his niece is just the best woman in the world, and you have won a treasure in herself alone. Now try to be worthy of her."

"Hang me, if I don't!" cried Jerry. "I've made a fool of myself, but don't let her know."

"Not a word. Come, let us go back."

Jerry cleaned out his room the next day, sending most of the things off to be sold at auction. He saved the harp, though, for Lalage. Then he hired a pretty little house out in the suburbs of the city, furnished it, and began life anew, with something to live for and work for, and I really believe that they are the happiest pair of married lovers among my acquaintances.

At present Jerry is studying law with Mr. Bulger, and it is possible that he may yet make a stir in the world. I hope, though, that the first use he makes of his legal knowledge may not be in an attempt to break his Aunt Julinah's will.



## MISS KENT.

BY MALCOLM ALSTYNE.

### I

It was a stormy day in March. The wind blew with keen power, and dark clouds floated rapidly over the sky. Any one having to traverse the streets that day would realize the decided unpleasantness of the weather.

But Miss Kent had that day, as usual, been traversing the streets of Middleport considerably. She was a music teacher, and her duties caused her to go from house to house, in order to give her pupils lessons. Wearisome work it was, but she had become so accustomed to it that it did not seem so really fatiguing to her. She had come well recommended to Middleport a year before, and since that time she had been industriously plying her vocation.

It will be as well to state here that Middleport was a prosperous town of about twenty-five hundred people—a place that for its size paid much attention to educational and musical interests. Miss Kent's day's work was done at last; the last pupil for the day had received instruction, and with a sigh of relief she started for her boarding-place. She carried a large book and several sheets of music. As she walked along a gust of wind caught the sheets, and by some means blew several of them out of her hands. They were blown in different directions, some whirling up the sidewalk, and one or two going out into the street. As she paused, scarcely knowing which to attempt to secure first, a pleasant voice at her side said, "I will get them for you."

She glanced around, and beheld standing by her a gentleman a little above medium height, with dark brown eyes, and a closely trimmed though heavy black beard, apparently some twenty-five years of age.

"I will be very much obliged if you will," she said.

The gentleman first secured those in the middle of the street, and then chased the others up the sidewalk till he had them all.

"They are a little soiled," he observed, as he handed them to her, "but still not valueless, by any means."

"You are very kind," said Miss Kent; "I thank you."

She folded her shawl more closely about her, and went on her way.

"I wonder who that lady is?" said Morton Gilbert—for that was his name—as he passed on his way down the street. "She is extraordinarily handsome and ladylike. I used to know everybody here, but lately, being absent so much, I have lost the run of people."

Miss Kent's thoughts were anything but unpleasant ones; she fancied that she should rather like this young man with a pleasant frank face, if she should become acquainted with him.

She reached her destination at length. It was nearly at the end of the street; it was quite a genteel house that she entered. She boarded in the family of Doctor Forsythe, a kind man who had first induced her to come to Middleport, by telling her she could do well in teaching there. By the way, he was interested in having her there, for his own daughters were being instructed by her. Please do not misunderstand. Miss Kent received no special favors from Doctor Forsythe; she rendered full return for all he did for her. She was not one of the kind to be dependent upon any one, if it were possible to be avoided. She entered the house, went up stairs to her room, but soon came down again into the parlor. No one was there, but a bright fire was burning in the grate, casting a ruddy glow around. She sat by the fire a moment or two, and then went to the piano. One would suppose that she had had enough of the piano during the day; but not so; true, she had grown most heartily tired of hearing dull pupils drum upon it, but to touch its keys herself, and to draw from it sounds in harmony with her feelings, was and would be always a pleasure.

Miss Kent was passionately fond of music, and this fact lightened greatly her labor. She would have been contented to sit for hours alone, bringing from the instrument sweet sounds of melody. But

this evening she had scarcely touched the keys when she was interrupted by the entrance of a young man.

"Good-evening, Miss Kent," he said, as he bowed to her.

This was Vernon Forsythe, Doctor Forsythe's nephew. He was not a member of the family, but only a visitor, having come to his uncle's two months before, and remained ever since.

"You need not cease playing on my account," he said, as Miss Kent seated herself by the fire.

"I do not," she said. "I do not wish to play."

There was silence for some time. She seemed abstracted in thought, and he—well, perhaps Vernon Forsythe was collecting his thoughts for some particular purpose.

"Miss Kent," he said, at length, "has it ever occurred to you that I must have some particular reason for staying here at my uncle's so long, when I came with the avowed intention of remaining but a month?"

"I have never given the subject any special thought," she said, somewhat coolly.

"Would it astonish you," he continued, "if I should inform you that you yourself were the cause of my remaining?"

Miss Kent had been thrown upon her own resources at an early age, consequently, though she was but twenty, she thoroughly understood the ways of the world, and the manners of men. She instantly saw and comprehended at what Vernon Forsythe was aiming.

"I do not wish to answer your question," she said, more coldly than before.

He bit his lip, and for a moment looked straight into the fire. "You are the cause," he uttered, finally.

She made no answer to this.

"Will you give me no encouragement to speak?" he asked, impatiently.

She turned herself full upon him. Certainly he was blind not to have read discouragement in those cool quiet orbs. "Still I do not wish to answer your question," she said.

"Miss Kent," he said, "though you seem unwilling to commit yourself at all, I am going to commit myself fully. Hear me. I love you?"

The girl must have been accustomed to

such things, for not a particle more color than usual flamed to her face. She received this declaration as quietly as though she had heard the same words from a dozen others. Perhaps it will not be amiss to state that she had heard them.

"Mr. Forsythe, I am sorry to hear it," she said, simply.

He grew pale; in those words he read his fate. "Will you not tell me that you love me?" he said.

She made no reply.

"Answer me!" he said, almost fiercely. "Do you love me?"

There was something like pity in her eyes now. "I think," she answered, "that in such cases as this the sooner a final decision is reached the better. So I will tell you that I do not love you."

He grew white to his very lips, whether with anger, or disappointment, or pain, or all combined, was impossible to tell. "Then you love another?" he said, desperately.

It was on her lips to say "You have no right to know that!" but, pitying him, she did not say it. Instead, she satisfied him on that point by saying, "Mr. Forsythe, I love no one in the manner to which you refer."

"Then there is hope for me," he continued; "let me hope!"

"I cannot do it," was her reply. "I do not wish to be cruel, but I must tell you I can never love you. It is best I should speak plainly; let your love for me perish, for there is no hope. I am willing to be your friend, that is all."

If he had not been angry before, he was growing so now. He forgot himself entirely—or perhaps it would be better to say he showed forth something of what he was.

"So," he sneered, "I am refused by a music teacher!"

"You should have thought of that before," she said, quickly, "or rather of the possibility of it. Perhaps it is better to be refused by a music teacher than to—to—"

"Yes! I, the proud and wealthy Vernon Forsythe, am refused by a music teacher. Miss Kent, you should have considered that you would be raised above the necessity of toil. Yes," he continued, mockingly, "you might have become a *lady*! Even if you did not love me, it would have been well to marry me, for then you could queen it over society."



Her eyes flashed upon him with an expression that made him cower. "My heart and my hand are my own!" spoke forth the royal woman. "They will never be bartered for wealth. Thank Heaven, if I am a music teacher, I am in an independent position! I do not know that I will ever wed; but when I do it will be to a man I can respect and love. Good-evening!" And she moved proudly from the room.

## II.

MISS KENT's Christian name was Imogene—a very pretty name, so it might as well have been written before this.

Imogene and Mr. Vernon Forsythe did not meet again until the next day at dinner. Then he announced that he should leave Middleport sometime during the next week and return home.

"By the way," he added, "my friend Morton Gilbert, who has been travelling in Europe for a year or so, will dine with us to-morrow; and he will also probably go home with me when I return next week."

"Is he handsome?" inquired Miss Mollie Forsythe, one of the doctor's daughters.

"I am glad to say that he is," answered Vernon.

"That is all you think about, Mollie," said Doctor Forsythe. "You never hear Miss Kent asking such questions as that."

"Is that intended for a compliment, Doctor Forsythe?" said Imogene. "Thank you, if it is."

"O Imogene!" said Miss Mollie, abruptly, "it's nice, aint it, that you are going to take a holiday to-morrow? You shall help Cousin Vernon entertain Mr. Gilbert."

Miss Kent made no reply to this, and the merry girl commenced in a new strain. "I wonder what's the matter with Cousin Vernon, anyhow, to-day? He is moody and abstracted, and has eaten nothing worthy of notice either for breakfast or dinner. I wonder if he is in love? Tell me, are you not?"

"I shouldn't tell you if I were," he answered, somewhat crossly.

"Humph! cross, are you?" continued Mollie. "Touched you in a tender place, did I? I know you are in love now!"

And so she ran on during the whole of the meal.

The next day Imogene was unwell, and though the young gentleman known as Mr.

Gilbert dined at Doctor Forsythe's, she did not go down to dinner. Indeed, it must not be inferred that this would form the slightest motive for her doing so, for she had no desire whatever to behold him. The name was unfamiliar to her, and she had no idea that she had ever beheld its possessor.

Late in the evening she became better, and concluded that she would go down and enliven herself by playing a piece upon the piano. She did go down, and as she entered the parlor, found that it was occupied. Vernon, Doctor Forsythe and his daughters were there, and—

"Mr. Gilbert," said Mollie Forsythe, as she introduced Imogene to a strange gentleman. She had not expected to meet any one, but Mr. Gilbert—she had certainly met him before. She remembered in a moment; he was the gentleman who had secured her stray pieces of music. He had not only dined but supped with Vernon Forsythe!

"I am happy to say that Miss Kent and I have met before," said Mr. Gilbert, apparently much pleased that they had met again.

And Imogene Kent's heart beat a little more rapidly than usual, though perhaps she herself was not aware of this, as Morton Gilbert's brown eyes were bent upon her. However this may be, her manner was perfectly cool and self-possessed.

"Mr. Gilbert rendered me quite a service yesterday, in saving some of my music which the wind had blown away," she said, simply.

After this the acquaintance of the two, Imogene Kent and Morton Gilbert, progressed rapidly. They were soon on as good terms as if they had known each other for a long time. He seemed to direct his conversation to her principally.

"Can we have some music, I wonder?" cried Mollie Forsythe, finally.

"Let us have some music, by all means," echoed Mr. Gilbert.

"Imogene will play," remarked Doctor Forsythe.

"Yes, come, Imogene," said Mollie.

"Let me add my persuasion," spoke Morton Gilbert. "Miss Kent, please play and sing for us."

Thus strongly solicited, Miss Kent could not refuse, and taking her place at the piano, she played a couple of pieces, ac-

companying the last with her voice. It was a simple love song, but as it ended, something like the consciousness that this girl's was the one voice for him entered Morton Gilbert's heart.

"There, that is all that I intend to play," said Imogene, as she left the piano. "You remember, Mollie, that I have not been well to-day, anyhow, and so please do not ask me to play any more. But we will listen to *you* now with the greatest of pleasure."

Miss Mollie took her turn at the piano, singing and playing several pieces very creditably.

Mr. Gilbert had by some means got close to Imogene, and he found opportunity to say in a low tone, "Miss Kent, you have a beautiful voice."

"Thank you," was all the answer she made.

Shortly after Mollie ceased Miss Kent asked to be excused. "I have before told you," she said, "that I am not very well."

Vernon Forsythe and she had scarcely exchanged a word during the whole evening, but he said of her, in a whisper to Morton, as she left the room, "Nice girl, aint she, Gilbert? Quite a lady, too, considering that she is only a music teacher. One would suppose that she is worth a million from the queenliness of her manner."

Morton pretended not to hear him—at least he made no reply.

It may as well be stated here that Morton Gilbert was of a proud and wealthy family.

But it is not necessary to state here whether this announcement was calculated to make him respect Miss Kent less or not; the effect of this upon his sentiments may be judged by his actions in the future.

"What do you think of her, Gilbert?" asked Mr. Forsythe, as they were retiring upon this evening. "Of Miss Kent, I mean."

"I am not much in the habit of expressing my opinion of young ladies when I have had such short acquaintance—in-deed, not much in the habit of doing it all," replied Mr. Gilbert; "but—but—Miss Kent impresses me very favorably."

"My uncle Forsythe treats her as if she were a member of his own family," continued Vernon; "but—well, she came here a year ago, a stranger, and I—some-

times fear that she is a mere adventuress, and will repay him in a way far different from what he deserves. Mayhap she is deceiving us all."

Truly Mr. Vernon Forsythe was showing forth some of the meanness of his nature, in speaking thus of an unprotected girl of whom he knew not a word of harm—especially after the events of the preceding evening.

"Do you know of any evil the lady has done?" asked Morton Gilbert, shortly and emphatically.

"N—n—o, I don't," stammered Vernon, crossly.

"Has she refused you, then?" Mr. Gilbert scarcely dreamed that he was striking so straight at the mark.

"The mischief?" ejaculated Vernon Forsythe. "Do you suppose that I would give a music teacher a chance to refuse me?"

"Enough! enough!" said Morton, pacifically; "we will drop the subject, and not quarrel about a lady whom I have known but one evening, and of whom, by your words, you know nothing."

That night visions of a bright fair face, with deep expressive eyes, sweet red lips, and cheeks of delicate crimson, flitted continually across the slumbers of Morton Gilbert, and more than once he awoke with the name "Miss Kent" upon his lips.

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### III.

MR. VERNON FORSYTHE seemed to be somewhat variable in his intentions, for he did not leave Middleport the next week, as he had announced he should do, but stated to the family, when Miss Kent was not present, that he should remain indefinitely, saying that he had no special reason for doing so, but that it was his whim. The truth is, the young man had nothing whatever to do in the world but to amuse himself, so that it did not make it inconvenient to any one for him to stay, neither was there any call for him to leave until he was entirely ready to do so.

But his object in staying? Perhaps he did not fully realize himself what it was. There was still left a desire to win the love of Imogene Kent, and mingled with that was the resolve—not definite, however, as yet—that she should marry no one else, if he could prevent it. That he loved her

with all the strength of his fiery nature, there was no doubt; that he was an unprincipled man, will be made equally clear; so that he might have a strong influence in determining Imogene's future happiness. And, in spite of her declaration that she could never love him, he was not entirely hopeless; she might change; certainly a match with him could not be a very undesirable thing. He was a Forsythe, not entirely unattractive in person, and, as beforementioned, wealthy.

But one thing began to occur that did not please him at all: Morton Gilbert was becoming a frequent visitor at Doctor Forsythe's residence; and he inferred—he had good cause for his inference—that Miss Kent was the attraction that drew him there. Apparently the music teacher was making another conquest. Vernon bitterly lamented he had ever brought him there.

"I didn't think of his falling before her," he said to himself. "Not that I care for this part of it, but I can't deny that Gilbert is a man who is calculated to win a woman's heart, and she—pshaw! he shall not have her."

One evening, a couple of weeks after Vernon had made his declaration, Miss Kent entered the parlor, and found him standing with his elbows on the mantel. She had supposed the parlor was unoccupied, and now turned to withdraw.

"Miss Kent, remain," said he. "I have something to say to you."

She turned back and seated herself upon a sofa.

He seemed to be in no hurry in speaking, but stood idly drumming upon the mantelpiece.

"I am waiting your pleasure," she said, finally. "I would not have remained to interrupt your thoughts if you had not requested me to. I scarcely ever refuse a reasonable request."

"I am ready to speak," he replied. "I haven't very much to say, after all. I suppose you are beginning to triumph again in that you are making another conquest. Mr. Forsythe and Mr. Gilbert—that is well for a—"

She arose and looked him in the face with her eyes full of calm scorn. "So you wished me to remain, did you, Mr. Forsythe, that you might insult me? You can scarcely expect me to remain for that purpose."

She started to leave the room once more, but he was before her, and would not let her go.

"You shall hear all I have to say," he uttered. "I suppose you love Morton Gilbert, do you not?"

Her face grew very pale, but she answered him not a word.

"So I am not worthy of an answer?" he continued. "Well, I will assume that you do, and now hear me;"—he was growing very angry, or he certainly would not have said yet what followed—"you shall never wed him. I have loved you, woman, passionately, but my love shall turn to hatred, and my hatred shall be stronger than my love has been. In that you will have much to fear. Yes, I will make your love a curse to any man upon whom you will bestow it. You may think I am premature; perhaps I am in this case, but I have warned you for all time. I am done, you may go."

She was as white as death, but still not uttering a syllable; never taking her blazing eyes from his face, she retreated to the door. Then turning, he heard her slow and stately tread as she departed.

"By heavens! she bears it well," he muttered. "She is indeed a very queen. I thought I could provoke her to retort. I know she was angry enough at me to kill me. Most women would have indulged in a paroxysm of tears, but she showed no evidence of any such weakness. I can but admire her self-control."

He had sunk into a seat, and his anger was cooling. "I have gone too far," he uttered to himself at length. "I have not only ruined my chances, but I was indeed premature. Well, so must it be now, war is declared, we are enemies henceforth. It is said that forewarned is forearmed. It would have been better if I had said nothing; but to make up for it, when it comes to active measures, I will only work the harder."

The next morning Miss Kent was not at the breakfast-table.

As she made her round this morning she stopped at a place where she was only an occasional, not a regular caller. This was the residence of Mrs. Bushnell, a widow lady in independent circumstances. She and Miss Kent had become somewhat intimately acquainted. She had taken what she chose to call a "great fancy" to Imo-

gene. She was a kind woman, a perfect lady, and possessing no daughters of her own, she had said more than once, "My dear Imogene, I wish that you could become my companion. If it ever becomes necessary for you to leave Doctor Forsythe, come and reside with me." And she would add, "You wouldn't have to feel dependent upon me; you could repay me for all I should do for you in many ways—not very hard ways, either."

And this morning Imogene told her that she would now be glad to avail herself of the kind offer.

"And when will you come?" inquired the lady.

"If you have no objections, we will say that I have already come," answered Imogene. "Sometime I will tell you why it is so abruptly."

"I am glad it is so soon," said Mrs. Bushnell. "When will you have your things brought?"

"Before long," was the reply; "probably to-day. My piano, however, not so soon."

And thus Imogene made arrangements to change her residence. She had during the night considered the matter well. At first she had thought she would tell Doctor Forsythe all, and that she could not longer remain under the same roof with his nephew. Then it entered her mind that this would cause trouble in the Forsythe family—the old doctor would probably get highly enraged with Vernon, and then there would be a terrible quarrel. And the high-principled girl resolved that she would not even run the risk of causing enmity between men of the same blood; she would bear wrong first; it would all be made right some day, she had no doubt. That Doctor Forsythe would not understand her, and that he would think strangely and even hardly of her, she did not doubt; but it was all she could do. She would have to leave his house abruptly, without any explanations whatever. She would bear all the blame herself.

This day, as the Forsythe family were sitting down to dinner, wondering what had become of Imogene, a letter was brought in for the doctor. He paused to read it.

"Humph!" he ejaculated when he had finished it. "I can't understand the meaning of this. Listen!"

And he read as follows:

"MY DEAR FRIEND, — Circumstances over which I have no control force me abruptly and unexpectedly to leave your house. Believe me when I state that I am very sorry to do so. However, at present I cannot give my reasons for this change. Please do not think harshly of me. If you knew all, you would not blame me. I am deeply grateful for your kindness in the past.  
IMOGENE KENT."

"Now," ejaculated the old gentleman when he had finished reading, "some of you have deeply insulted Imogene, or she would never have done this. I want to know who it was."

And he looked about as if he wanted to find some one upon whom he could vent a little just anger.

"Was it you, Mollie?" he asked.

"Indeed, father, Miss Kent and I never had the least trouble in the world," answered Mollie.

The next time the doctor struck in the right place.

"Vernon, was it you?" he said.

Mr. Vernon Forsythe bit his lip, and made no reply to this.

"Vernon," repeated Doctor Forsythe, "I want to know if you have been the cause of this action on the part of Miss Kent?"

"How could I cause her to do this?" answered Vernon, evasively.

"ANSWER ME SQUARELY, SIR," retorted the doctor in great anger, "whether you have done any wrong to Miss Kent or not?"

"I—I—have done her no wrong that I am aware of," answered this very worthy young man.

"I scarcely believe you now," was the reply. "Your hesitation condemns you. Really, if I were positive that you had in any way insulted her, I'd horsewhip you. YES, I WOULD," raged the old gentleman, "AND I'D DO IT DECENTLY, TOO!"

#### IV.

MORTON GILBERT called at the residence of Doctor Forsythe on the evening of the next day after Miss Kent had departed.

Vernon was still further satisfied as to what drew him there, when he presently asked for her.

Morton did not stay long, but excusing himself, departed. He did not soon come again.

One evening, a couple of weeks later, Vernon was made aware that it was time to proceed to his active measures, if he intended to do so—that is, he was impressed with the fact that he should thus proceed.

A friend overtook him on the street and inquired, "Have you heard the news, Forsythe?"

"I have heard nothing special," was his reply.

"Our friend Gilbert is paying quite serious attentions to Miss Kent. By the way, she used to be a member of your uncle's family. I was not aware she had ceased to be until to-day. Gilbert is certainly a frequent visitor at Mrs. Bushnell's, where she now is. The old lady used to be a friend of mine. Think I'll call, for this Miss Kent is certainly an attractive girl. Gilbert is ahead of me, though. Rumor says they are engaged."

Thus the young man went on, meaning no harm whatever by speaking thus familiarly of Miss Kent.

"Well, if he wants her, I wish him success," answered Vernon, evasively.

"I am not so sure that I do," said the other, lightly. "She is one among a thousand."

"I wasn't aware that you knew her," said Forsythe.

"O, I am only slightly acquainted, but—I am going across the street. Good-day."

"So, so!" muttered Vernon Forsythe, as he walked slowly along, "matters are progressing more rapidly than I had thought they would. I have been asleep; but now to my plans, and we will see who will triumph."

He entered the Forsythe residence, and went straight to his room.

"Now for a plot," he thought. "I believe the one of which I have been thinking will accomplish my purpose. I'll try it, anyway, and if that don't succeed, I'll devise something else. This will certainly be good, though. Gilbert is very proud. It was lucky that I beheld that item in that old newspaper."

He obtained writing materials, and sat down at a table. "Now to begin," he muttered. He wrote a letter, or what seemed to be a letter, and then examining it closely, it apparently did not suit him,

for he destroyed it, saying as he did so, "There must be no resemblance to my usual hand." This he repeated several times, writing and destroying a number in succession.

At last he obtained a writing that seemed to satisfy him, for he folded it and placed it under lock and key, at the same time uttering the words, "So far so good."

Then he sat for some minutes in deep thought. "I must take all proper precautions," he said to himself, finally, "to insure the success of my plan. That there is such a person in the prison I have no doubt, but I will write to the officer in charge, and have him to certify it. It will involve a delay of a day or two, but better that than that my plan should be foiled." So he wrote once more, taking no trouble, however, this time to disguise his handwriting.

What all this meant may be better understood when a conversation that occurred between Morton Gilbert and Mr. Vernon Forsythe a few days later is related.

It occurred in the room of the former, whither the latter had gone for the very purpose of holding it. He did not state the object for which he had come, however, but approached the subject gradually.

"Gilbert," he said, apparently lightly, at length, "do you know what is flying about town?"

"I cannot say that I do," answered Morton.

"It is stated that you and Miss Kent are engaged."

"Humph, indeed?" responded the other, neither affirming nor denying.

Vernon assumed a serious air.

"My dear friend," he said, "I am going to assume that you are not, and I truly hope that you are not; and if you have any idea of engaging yourself to her, I have some facts to present to you that I think will prevent your doing so. Believe me that all I shall do will be through friendship for you; I am totally disinterested in this matter, I assure you. I do not wish to pain you, but here is a letter that, under the circumstances, I cannot withhold from you. Please read this latter portion." And he handed Morton the very letter he had taken so much pains to prepare in his own room a few days before.

To Morton it seemed to be an ordinary letter of correspondence, in a hand that

was unfamiliar. Its concluding paragraph—the one to which his attention had been drawn, and which he read at a glance almost before he was aware of its purport—was as follows:

"I must tell you something about Miss Kent the music teacher, which I neglected to do when I was at Middleport last fall. She's the daughter of a convicted felon. I was in court in a certain place in this State four years ago, and saw him sentenced. I remember not only his name, Homer Kent, but also the fact that his daughter was present in court, and her great beauty attracted attention. When I saw your Miss Kent, I recognized the same person immediately. Your friend,

"HERBERT OWENS."

Morton turned the sheet to look at its heading; it bore only the words "Brentwood Grange" at its head. He smiled scornfully, but only said:

"Well, I have read."

"To satisfy myself fully," continued Forsythe, "I have written to the authorities at Columbus that have charge of the State prison, and here is my answer."

He pulled out of a yellow envelop an important looking document; no need to mistake from whence it came, for it was headed in glaring capitals. It contained this communication:

"We have the man of whom you inquire, Homer Kent, under confinement here; he is sentenced for twenty years. He was brought here four years ago.

"HOSMER JONES, *Sup. Penitentiary.*"

"You certainly went to a good deal of unnecessary trouble, Forsythe, to obtain that," said Morton, coldly.

"I obtained it partly for the sake of my friends who are likely to be imposed upon by this—" He stopped, for there was something in Morton Gilbert's eyes that showed it would be dangerous to proceed further in that direction; "and—and partly for my own satisfaction," he stammered, in conclusion.

"I cannot but look upon your showing me this, as well as your obtaining this last document, with the highest contempt," was Morton's utterance, as he paced the room angrily.

"Peace, peace, my friend!" said the hypocrite. "You do not appreciate what

I am doing for you now, but you will some day. And now, as you are a little out of temper, I bid you good-evening, for fear you may say some harsh things that might create a breach between us." And before Morton could say another word he was gone.

"Curse you, curse you, Morton Gilbert!" Vernon Forsythe muttered, as he hurried along the street. "I know now that you love her, and to be her successful lover will be your death. The mischief!" In his haste he had almost run over an old woman. "Why don't you keep out of my way?" he ejaculated, roughly.

But she was hurrying away, and could scarcely have heard what he said. He paused to notice her retreating form.

"Heavens! that figure—it is—no, impossible; she was young and beautiful—that one is old and elfish. But still there is a strange resemblance of figure. Pshaw! it is nonsense for me to suppose it is the same."

And he started on once more, apparently forgetting in a moment the woman and the impression she had made upon him.

"I think my seeds were well planted," he continued to himself. "Gilbert is angry now, but when he comes to his senses, he will credit this well-constructed tale. And he, a proud Gilbert, will never marry a felon's daughter. Ha! ha! I give myself honor for a very creditable plot; the way it is gotten up, he can never ferret it out. Ha! ha! Herbert Owens, of Brentwood Grange! Satisfactory, aint it? As for Homer Kent, State penitentiary, he will find him there; that part of it is all correct anyhow. I am certain, too, that he will never ask me any questions, for he is too proud for that."

But what was the effect of this scheme upon Morton Gilbert? That he loved Imogene Kent he had been compelled to acknowledge to himself; however, no one else, not even she herself, knew positively that he loved her—he had only confessed his love to himself. His anger did cool, and then he calmly thought over this story. That it was true he could scarcely doubt; that Vernon Forsythe would be so entirely base as to invent it was scarcely likely to enter his mind, especially as he knew of no reason why he should do all this. Had he not wronged Vernon in growing angry? he even asked himself once. The fellow

no doubt meant well in telling him of this. The world would gossip greatly when it should transpire that he, a member of a proud family, had proposed marriage to a felon's daughter. Yes, there was the point! Mrs. Morton Gilbert—if she should chance to love him—the daughter of a man in the State prison. A very, very great thing would that be in the eyes of the world.

But, after all, whether he acknowledged it to himself or not, down in his heart was the answer to his question about Vernon. It was in the consciousness that an insult had been offered to his manhood in the conveyance of the insinuation, that, loving this woman, herself pure, he should cease to love her upon obtaining the knowledge that she was so unfortunate as to be the daughter of a criminal. And in his heart, too, was the knowledge that it was best to *turn his back upon all the world, if need be*, and cling to his love. Love would bring him happiness—the bowing to his pride never could.

As to whether Morton Gilbert would act the better part, be true to himself, his happiness, remains to be seen.

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## V.

MIDDLEPORT was excited, and over no very great matter either. It was simply this: Professor Johnson's musical convention had been in session for a week, and now it was about to close with a grand concert. However, it wasn't very strange that the inhabitants of Middleport should be interested, for nearly all of the musical talent of the place, as well as that of neighboring places, would be engaged in it.

So it was heralded in flaming bills that Professor Johnson, president of the Alleghany College of Music, would conduct a musical concert in Middleport, and there would be a chorus of one hundred and twenty-five voices. And it would be held on the third night after the day on which Vernon had made his pretended revelation to Morton Gilbert about Miss Kent's father. Miss Kent herself was to take a somewhat prominent part in the affair.

It is not necessary to dwell here. The appointed evening came, and as large an audience as any manager could desire greeted Professor Johnson's concert.

The performance progressed finely; it

was half way through. The next piece on the programme was a solo, to be sung by Miss Imogene Kent. This was the first time that she had appeared, but from this place her name was marked several times on the programme.

The curtains rolled up, disclosing Imogene standing calm and self-possessed before the large audience. There was a low murmur of admiration; the girl was strikingly beautiful. But to one seated not twenty feet from the front of the stage, her appearance brought peculiar emotions. That one was Morton Gilbert. There had been, during the last few days, in his heart a great struggle between love and pride.

Let not scorn fall upon him; it requires great, very great courage to brave the opinion of the world. That struggle was an eminently natural one, and one, too, that occurs in the bosom of some one every day in the history of the world. Alas, alas, how seldom doth love, how frequently doth pride conquer!

But now Morton Gilbert's heart went out with a great longing toward this girl, whom he was realizing he loved with all his strength.

We must notice one portion of Imogene's dress; that is, an overdress of light gauzy material. But the song commenced, her clear sweet voice rang out over the house; not a sound save her tones, not even a breath could be heard.

When she had finished the silence continued for a moment; it was broken by demonstrations of tumultuous applause. Then there was encore after encore. Miss Kent did not wish to appear, so the manager tried to still them, but he could not.

She appeared again at length, slightly flushed, but with no other signs of embarrassment. Instantly the silence was as breathless as before. But scarcely had the first notes fallen upon the ears of the stilled multitude, when there was seen creeping up over the scenery behind the singer the lurid glow of flames.

In a moment it had burst into a bright glare—in another moment, even while the sounds of her voice were yet echoing through the room, before she had comprehended her danger, a shower of sparks had fallen upon the light dress of Imogene Kent, and she was ablaze.

At the first sight of the flames the audience had risen in involuntary terror, but

now, with the sight of that slender form being wrapped in flames, it sank back, as one person, in terrible fascination.

There seemed to be but one in all the assemblage who had power to move; that one was Morton Gilbert. He sprang from his seat, ran forward, leaped upon the stage, and jerking the covering from the piano, a bright woollen stuff, he wrapped it around Miss Kent. It answered every purpose; the flames that were fast enfolding her were extinguished in a moment.

"Are you injured?" he inquired, breathlessly.

"Thank Heaven, I am not!" she said.

The audience was now breaking up in wild confusion.

"Let there be no confusion!" shouted a voice in thunder tones. "There are abundant means of exit, and, if you will all keep cool, there need be no one injured."

This reassured the frightened people, and in ten minutes every one of the audience were outside. Middleport hall was no death-trap with insufficient modes of egress.

Morton had stood still for a moment, scarcely realizing now what was going on, scarcely hearing those loud tones, for Imogene Kent was clasped close to his heart. The flames were rapidly increasing, the performers were rapidly making their exit at side entrances.

"We must go," she was the first to say.

He started as if from a trance.

"Certainly we must," he said. "Here, take my arm."

When they reached the outside, the flames were bursting brightly out of the building.

"It must go; it cannot be saved," was the cry.

Soon the very heavens were illumined by the glare of flames. But we must pass from this scene; suffice it to say that the flames did their work completely, the large building was soon in ashes.

Morton escorted Miss Kent home.

"I will call to-morrow," he said, as he gave her into the charge of Mrs. Bushnell. And before either of them could answer, he had bade them good-night and was gone.

After he had reached his room, he paced it steadily for hours. And in that time his love conquered his pride, and he resolved that on the morrow he would offer Imogene

Kent his heart and hand. In the brief moments of her peril this evening, he had discovered how inestimably dear she was to him; his whole life would be a blank without her. And when the conquest was accomplished there was a great relief to him; he felt that he intended to do what was just both for himself and Miss Kent, and his conscience was satisfied.

The next evening found him at the residence of Mrs. Bushnell. Imogene received him alone. For some time their conversation ran on ordinary subjects.

"I suppose you experienced no ill effects from your peril last night?" he said, finally.

"None, whatever," she answered. She rose, walked over to him, and offered him her hand. "I have not thanked you yet," she said, "for preserving my life. I am deeply grateful; allow me to—"

He was holding her hand, and now he interrupted her.

"You need not thank me," he said. "O Miss Kent, your life is more precious to me than my own!"

He paused for a moment, and she withdrew her hand.

"I came here this evening," he commenced again, "with the intention of speaking my heart to you. I will do it now; Imogene Kent, I love you!"

She had seated herself again, and her face was turned from him.

"You are the only woman I have ever loved," he continued, "and my love is as deep and strong as my being. Tell me now whether—"

She had turned her face toward him.

"Mr. Gilbert," she interrupted, very quietly, "consider what you are saying. I am only a poor music teacher, you are the wealthy Mr. Gilbert of a proud family."

"I have considered all," he said, quickly; "and in telling you that I love you, I have said the strongest words that I am able to say—those words comprehend all. And O, Miss Kent, if you love me, let no false delicacy about my being wealthy, and, as you choose to term it, of proud family, come between us! You are my queen, and if you can tell me that you love me you will make me entirely happy."

Her face flamed, then it grew very pale; her eyes moistened. The girl who had passed through many trying scenes so calmly and quietly was touched to the



heart at last. She bowed her head and burst into tears.

"I do love you," she murmured, brokenly, "and I will try to make you happy."

## VI

PLEASANT leafy June was almost gone, but before it should pass away, it was set that Imogene Kent and Morton Gilbert should be united in bonds binding forever. To them both it was a pleasant time, this period of courtship. Morton had insisted that the wedding-day should not be too far distant, and then setting the day himself, had persuaded Imogene to consent to it.

For a while the story that Vernon Forsythe had made him acquainted with had troubled him a little; not the fact of its being true, but that she never told him of it. But at length his mind was set at rest, and the matter gave him no more uneasiness.

"Was your father's name Homer Kent?" he said, abruptly, to Imogene one day.

"It was not," she answered, her calm truthful eyes fixed upon him; "his name was Edward. Why do you ask?"

"I heard the name Homer Kent," answered Morton, "and thought perhaps it might be that of your father."

"My father died when I was fifteen," she said, sadly, "my mother one year later. O Morton, it is right I should tell you that my life till my father died was one of ease, since then one of hardship."

"Thank Heaven, it will be so no longer!" he said, fondly.

And, looking in the depths of her eyes, he was as well satisfied of the truth of what she was saying as he was of his own existence. There had been a mistake, a malicious falsehood by some one mayhap—perhaps Vernon's friend. If he had known of what had occurred between Imogene and Vernon himself, he would have been positive that it was a malicious falsehood. However, as yet he knew not of it.

The happy evening came at last. The wedding would be at Mrs. Bushnell's, and the old lady was happy in the fact that there would be a good deal of display.

The guests assembled, among them Vernon Forsythe. He had been invited at the request of Morton; Imogene knew nothing of his coming till she beheld him there.

As for Morton, he was too happy a man to harbor any ill-will against him, and he had never repeated the story of Homer Kent, which he supposed Forsythe fully believed.

The ceremony was said at last, the two were made one twain; the solemn words "what God hath joined together let not man put asunder" had been uttered. Then all was mirth and amusement, and Vernon Forsythe was the gayest of the gay.

At one time he was standing by Mrs. Bushnell, conversing in an animated manner, when his eye falling upon a figure at the opposite side of the room, he started violently.

"Who is that lady yonder with her back to us?" he asked of Mrs. Bushnell.

In the meantime the person spoken of had moved more into the light, and turned her face toward them; she was an old woman, apparently sixty years of age.

"That old lady?" said Mrs. Bushnell; "why, that is a friend of mine, Mrs. Cuthbert, a comparatively late acquaintance. Why did she attract your attention specially? One would suppose—"

"O, a mere resemblance!" replied Vernon, seemingly no longer interested in her.

"I could have sworn," thought Vernon to himself, "to that figure. I remember now I was struck by the resemblance of figure once before. That was on the street; she can't deceive me again."

His eyes were now fixed upon some other person with an expression that made Mrs. Bushnell shudder. What could be the matter with the man? She glanced in the direction of his gaze, and beheld Morton and Imogene surrounded by a gay group.

A few moments later he left her side. Slowly he made his way toward the bride and groom. At length they were standing comparatively alone, Imogene upon Morton's arm. Vernon went up before them, not noticing that the old woman who had startled him was close behind him.

"I am going to whisper my congratulations to your bride, Gilbert," he said, laughingly.

And before Morton could say yes or no, he bent his lips to Imogene's ear and hissed:

"I told you I would make your love a curse to any man upon whom you should bestow it. I shall make my words good; your husband dies this instant!"

And springing back before the horrified girl could utter a word, with the fires of deadly hatred in his eyes, he lifted over the breast of Morton Gilbert a gleaming blade; and he whom it threatened seemed to have no chance for his life, for before he could even comprehend that deadly motion the blade would fall.

A moment more—there was a blow; but it was not struck by Vernon Forsythe. Instead the old woman behind him had lifted her arm, and, with strength surprising for one of her apparent years, driven to its hilt in his side a dagger. He fell heavily to the floor.

"I am avenged; yon villain foiled?" she cried.

She raised herself erect, and threw from her person the disguise of age, standing before them all a young and beautiful woman.

"Blame me not!" she exclaimed to the horrified and apparently paralyzed assemblage. "It is but justice that he should die. That man, prostrate there by my blow, he, Vernon Forsythe, found me three years ago in the sunny vales of my pleasant Southern home, an innocent merry maiden; when he left me I was such no longer, my innocence was forever gone! Ha! ha! we are quits now. Revenge is sweet, almost as sweet, as sweet as the love I bore him! I am going, farewell!"

And she rushed wildly from their presence; none of them ever saw her more. Vernon Forsythe half raised himself as she departed.

"She has killed me," he groaned. "I'm dying with my sins upon me—unforgiven."

He sank back with the shades of the great change coming into his face.

"A word," he muttered. "Gilbert, I have tried to wrong you and your wife. You remember that letter I showed you about her father—it was a forgery written by myself. I saw the name Homer Kent in an old newspaper, as one who had been sentenced to the penitentiary, and acted upon the idea suggested by it. I loved Imogene with a love that might have made a better man of me, but she refused me, and I vowed to be revenged. To-night I would have killed you, but *she* stopped me. O, that awful pain—it is killing me! I have been a terrible sinner—for—"

Vernon Forsythe was dead!

A little more, and we are done. Morton and Imogene are entirely happy in the love of each other. They shudder sometimes, at least, Imogene shudders when she thinks how nearly all her happiness came to being destroyed upon her wedding evening. But the terrible end of Vernon Forsythe cannot darken the brightness of their lives. They pity the memory of the wretch—that is all.

## MISS MONTMORENCI.

BY MATTIE WINFIELD TORREY.

THE Montmorenci place was a perfect wilderness of beauty run to waste. The house had not been lived in for years; the vines and shrubberies had grown into a tangle and snarl of greenery; the once orderly gardens were given over to weeds, and disorder and confusion reigned where once all had been trim and well kept.

Built long before the days of "shoddy," the house was a substantial structure, and seemed capable of defying the storms of coming centuries. The broad expanse of lawn in front sloped down to the waters of the Hudson, and here and there, through the mazes of intricate foliage, might be caught heavenly views of that much praised yet surpassingly beautiful river.

So there the old place lay, a perfect Indian jungle of profuse vegetation, with no eye to admire, or hand to subject into anything like order the wilderness which reigned around; indeed, the family had nearly died out; its male members were all gone; there was only a daughter left, and

she was said to be eccentric, and a little fast—whatever horribly indefinite thing that may mean.

Miss Montmorenci had lived a good many years abroad, and, from having no will but her own to consult, had come to be quite independent, and fully competent to take care of herself. Her fortune being immense, she was abundantly able to indulge herself in any of the little expensive whims in which people of elegant tastes are permitted to luxuriate.

She was tall and stately, with such pride as became the last lineal representative of a noble house, in whose veins culminated the pure *sangre angle* of generations of aristocratic lineage. A fair blonde, with a complexion which no amount of either sun or wind could in the least impair; masses of silky blonde hair, clear gray eyes, and a mouth whose fullness many a man would have perilled his soul's salvation to have kissed.

She had had lovers in plenty all her life,

from the time she was a wee little sprite in short clothes, but at thirty Miss Montmorenci was still unwedded, and there was nothing for it except to conclude that she was hard of heart, and too much enamored of her own easy independence to be willing to run the risk of becoming entangled in matrimonial harness.

There had been a story years ago, current enough at the time, of a lover whose pride, at least, had equalled her own, though his worldly possessions were anything but large; but they had separated, and each had gone through the world thus far without coming again into contact, and events had drifted in, and the years between had come and gone, and the romance of long ago was as if it had never been.

Miss Montmorenci had an old duenna of a housekeeper, who matronized her at times, and, by way of making amends for the derelictions of her charge, was as severe in the dignity and unapproachableness of her virtue as her long years of spinsterhood might warrant.

It was early spring, and Miss Montmorenci's house on the Avenue was still the central point of attraction for a gay train of fashion worshippers. The lady herself was as cool and graciously unapproachable as ever, the gayeties of the winter not having, to outward appearances, at all affected either her spirits or temper, both of which were seemingly unruffled and placid.

It is morning; at least as near that season as people on the Avenue can be expected to arrive, and breakfast is upon the table. The duenna is seated on one side, severe in her usual toilet of black silk, with Miss Montmorenci, in a lovely white cashmere with blue facings, placed opposite. The room is furnished in blue moire, and there is a hint of the extravagant wealth of its mistress in all its appointments. The table service is of solid silver and the most delicate of china, and the light streams through damask, and filters through lace window draperies, ere it falls upon a single object within the room.

A pile of letters beside her plate attracts Miss Montmorenci's attention, and she languidly turns them over. They are of all shapes and sizes, from the tiny pink envelop, with its embossed monogram, to a huge business-like document.

Listlessly she glanced at each until the superscription of one of the largest and

most business-like caught her eye, when she made haste to tear it open, and hurriedly, not to say eagerly, read its contents. Possessed of this knowledge, she placidly sipped her chocolate and buttered her roll. When she had quite settled the matter in her own mind, she imparted a little light to the duenna.

"You remember the old place up the river? I gave orders some time since to have it put in repair. My agent writes to tell me that the work is going on. We will go up there for the summer. It will be ready for our occupation."

The duenna opened her eyes aghast at this new freak.

"And Saratoga, and Newport, and Long Branch?"

"They are too old a story. The novelty wore off of them ages ago. I am sighing for 'fresh fields and pastures new,' and the only wonder is I did not think of it before. I shall invite a dozen or two of the people who are least obnoxious, and they can keep each other in countenance, and go on with their flirtations as well there as elsewhere. You may as well make out a list of articles which we shall need sent up; and, while you are about it, order the carriage, and I will go out to select the carpets."

No grass grew under Miss Montmorenci's feet, or rather under the feet of her well-matched carriage-horses, until the furniture necessary for the complete setting out of her country-house was sent away under the supervision of half a dozen servants, headed by the duenna herself, who went *en avant* in order to prepare with all decorousness for the coming of her lady and her lady's guests.

From the deck of the steamer Miss Montmorenci gazed long and earnestly at so much of her mansion as was visible, listening with wellbred indifference to the flattering comments of her party. A short drive from the landing, over well-gravelled roads, smooth, and winding, and well shaded, and the house came into full view, and there stood the duenna, in the full panoply of her lustreless black silk, and Miss Montmorenci was welcoming her guests to the home of her Dutch ancestors.

There were the two Misses Vainstart, with their brother Charlie and his *fiancee*, little Rose Summers. Pretty Mrs. Dunston, and her bear of a husband, who was as jealous as a Turk, and couldn't help show-

ing it. Jenny Devine, who sang so like a seraph as to be known among her friends by the name of St. Cecelia. Will Master-son, who had set up for a wit, but had never yet reached the goal of his ambition, except in his own imagination. Cecil Thorpe, who, on the strength of a brigandish beard and a Veronese face, had fallen in love with art, and considered himself a veritable Titian. Besides these, half a dozen nonentities, with their respective wives or sweethearts, invited more for the purpose of filling up the gaps, than for any good they were capable of doing, either for themselves or others.

Miss Montmorenci never did things by halves, and the company collected beneath her roof was as well calculated to fuse and become one congenial whole, as any that could have been singled out from among the best New York society.

The appointments of the house were found to be perfect in all respects. The duenna had looked to that, and as she had *carte blanche* to order what she saw fit, there was no danger of failure in any department.

There was a French cook, with a small army of supernumeraries to reinforce him. There were most attentive maids and valets, whose sole ambition in life was to facilitate one's toilet, and turn one out a model of elegant attire.

The smooth lawns were just the very spot for croquet, and as rival clubs were soon formed, the game flourished, and was played with the scientific nicety it so well deserves, and so seldom receives. Of course there was boating, and fishing, and morning rides, and evening drives, and more than one expedition to places of interest, which were not hard to find in that neighborhood.

They were in the full tide of summer gayety, sometimes resolving themselves into a committee of the whole for the better prosecution of some scheme of merry-making; at other times dividing up into separate parties, as each felt inclined to pursue his or her own system of pleasure-seeking; but always meeting at dinner in the cool and well-lit dining-hall, and afterward spending the evening together, with music, dancing, games or flirtations upon the wide piazza, or along the moonlit walks, which intersected the grounds in all directions.

It was not monotonous at all, this round

of pleasure-seeking, for there was such infinite variety in the methods employed *pour passer le temps*, that no one could weary of them, or do more than guess at the form which the diversions would assume upon the morrow.

There was an interruption, however, one evening, and that with a vengeance. The railcars ran at no great distance from the house, and a whole train had come to grief in consequence of a misplaced switch; and there was hurrying to and fro and consternation wild in Miss Montmorenci's household when the fact became known.

Miss Laura Vainstart fainted quite away in her sympathy for the sufferers. Three or four of the others were thrown into hysterics, and were obliged to be put to bed, and treated to a course of sal volatile and aromatic vinegar.

Mrs. Dunston, Rose Summers and Miss Montmorenci proved themselves equal to the occasion, and flew across the grounds in the direction of the accident. The men had all gone to the rescue at the first note of alarm, and when Miss Montmorenci and her friends came up they found a wild scene of confusion and horror. The train—a portion of it, at least—had been thrown down an embankment, and partly into the river. Part of the wreck was in flames, and the lurid light threw a ghastly glare over the scene, which was rendered still more dreadful by the groans and shrieks of the wounded.

It was certainly trying to one's nerves, but the little band of heroic rescuers worked with a will; and their efforts, added to those of the unharmed passengers, brought relief to many a pain-racked sufferer. A surgeon and his assistants were on the ground almost as soon as the telegram, sent to the nearest town, could reach them. The motionless figures, from which, alas! came no longer any sigh or sound of grief, because the spirit had already rent its prison-house and departed, were one by one transported to the unharmed coaches, followed by the wounded, who were anxious to be sent to friends or families, and then the train started.

Five minutes after its departure Miss Montmorenci discovered the figure of a man lying in the grass. He had evidently crawled away from the scene of the disaster, and had fainted from his hurt and exhaustion. A broken leg, a fractured arm,

and how many other internal injuries the surgeon could hardly determine.

Sending on in order to have the duenna prepared for his reception, Miss Montmorenci gave orders to have the unconscious figure carried to the house. Slowly, and with the light of a few torches, the little procession moved off.

The report of the surgeon, after the broken limbs had been attended to, was somewhat more hopeful than had been anticipated. The man had recovered consciousness while his hurts were undergoing treatment, had declared himself uninjured, save for the broken limbs. An opiate had been administered, and he was now sleeping. Miss Montmorenci might retire with the conviction that all had been done that the necessities of the case demanded, or that medical skill had judged expedient.

Miss Montmorenci, however, seemed restless, and unable to profit by the advice of the good physician. She did not retire, and she did pace the long piazza back and forth long after every other eye was closed in slumber. Something seemed to have disturbed the usual calm placidity of her nature. Her manner was abrupt, and there was a nervousness about her step that had seemed quite foreign to her temperament. Whether she slept at all that night or not, she quitted her room at an unusually early hour the next morning, and sent the duenna the first thing to inquire how the sick man had passed the night.

Thorpe and Masterson, who had constituted what they were pleased to term the hospital corps of the previous night, gave rather a discouraging report. The patient had been restless, and there was an appearance of fever which boded no good. The doctor came again and applied his remedies, shook his wise head, looked as if he might say a good deal if he chose, but only recommended careful nursing, and promised to come again in the evening.

And so for several days the tide of gayety received a check at the thought of the suffering brought so near, but in the progress of events the tender care of which he was the recipient, combined with the strength of an excellent constitution, brought the patient around to that point from whence a recovery might with safety be predicted, though the fever had left him miserably weak. Through his days and nights of semi-consciousness, he had seemed

to have had strange dreams of a pale face bending over him, of soft gray eyes looking their sympathy from beneath a cloud of bright blonde hair, of a cool hand lain upon his throbbing brow. Whether these visions were the outcroppings of a fevered imagination, or whether a real presence had glided in and hovered about his sick bed, he could not tell; all was uncertain and vague, but that the recollection of these things had made a great impression upon him was evident from the way he brooded over them, turning them over and over in his mind, trying vainly to reconstruct, out of his own broken fancies, the beautiful apparition which had troubled his dreams.

When at length he was able to rise from his bed, and, with the assistance of a crutch and the aid of a friendly arm, could get out upon the piazza, he became the centre of attraction, holding daily a sort of reception, at which all the guests of the house assisted, from Mrs. Dunston, who was in haste to inaugurate a fresh flirtation, down to Thorpe, who began to study the face of the convalescent in every possible light, with a view to prospective sittings when he should have commenced the great historical piece which was then seething in his brain.

Mr. Layton, for that was the stranger's name, was admirably fitted for playing the part of Grand Lama to this little crowd of admiring worshippers, having been endowed by nature with a knightly bearing, and an exterior of more than ordinary attractiveness. He had, it appeared, been a great traveller. For years he had not set foot on his native soil. India, China, Japan were to him familiar regions; England, France, Italy—he knew them all better than he comprehended the astonishing changes that had taken place in the Great Republic since he became a wanderer.

Nobody noticed that Miss Montmorenci was invariably absent from these little gatherings, but so it was. As Mr. Layton's recovery progressed, the mistress of the mansion withdrew herself more and more from her guests, yet with so much tact that, knowing her reputation for eccentricity, no remarks were made, no observation elicited. Every one supposed that Layton had seen his hostess scores of times, when the fact was he had not met her—at least, not consciously—had not even heard her

name, and had no idea to whose hospitality he was indebted.

There was nothing strange in this. The party gathered was so large, and its several members so thoroughly at home, that it might have puzzled a well man to have made out who was master or mistress; while to Layton, until now confined to his room a helpless invalid, seeing only the duenna and the servants who had been detailed especially to attend him, and waited upon assiduously by Thorpe and Masterson, conscious only that every want was supplied, every attention lavished upon him, he had asked no questions, and nothing had ever been said in his presence that could give him an idea as to who was the owner of the elegant house and the grounds through which he soon began to drive, in the low pony phaeton which sometimes one, sometimes another of the party took pleasure in guiding. Perhaps, having wandered about the world so long, he had come to take "the good which the gods provided" without much comment thereon; at all events, he gained rapidly in health and strength, and in favor with all the Montmorenci guests.

And all this while the summer was passing, the first frosts had come, and the mountains were one blaze of vivid coloring, the like of which not all Thorpe's attempts could transfer to canvas. The mornings grew too chilly for croquet, the frosty evening air put an end to out-of-door rambling, and there began to be a quick undercurrent of preparation for breaking up the party and returning to town.

Layton, now promoted to a cane in place of the discarded crutch, declared his intention of spending the coming season in New York.

"By the way," cried Thorpe, "let's have the question settled here and now. Where's Miss Montmorenci? Go and fetch her, some of you. We want to know when she proposes to break up this establishment, so that we can all go back together. That's the proper thing to do."

But Miss Montmorenci was not to be found, though every room was carefully searched. Celine the maid inclined to the belief that mademoiselle disported herself in the grounds, was, in fact, taking her usual after-dinner constitutional; a truth which was borne out by the fact that later in the evening Miss Montmorenci made

her appearance, stepping through the low French window which opened upon the piazza, her blue silk dinner-dress gleaming through the folds of a fleecy white mantle which fell from her shoulders. She was gracious and easy as usual, but so coldly calm, and in her eyes was the look of one who had made up her mind to the inevitable.

Layton was surrounded by a little group, and did not notice the new arrival until his attention was aroused to the fact that there was much animated chat going on in another quarter of the room. Turning his head, he saw Miss Montmorenci gracefully poised in the centre of a little circle of her guests. The sight seemed to fascinate him; his gaze remained riveted upon her face, his ears drank in the clear tones of her voice as she replied to the eager questioning of her friends, declaring herself ready to go back to town whenever it should suit their pleasure or convenience to flit thitherward.

"Sorry to break up this pleasant party," said Thorpe, sauntering back to Layton's side. "Miss Montmorenci is a model of a hostess, and we've all enjoyed the summer mightily. Glad you're going with us, my boy. What! you are not going to retire at this early hour?"

But Layton slipped away, and was seen no more in the parlors that evening.

Miss Montmorenci was given to roaming about at unheard-of hours, and that night she seemed more restless than common, excusing Celine from her usual attendance, and commencing an endless walk up and down her room. When she had reason to suppose every eye but her own was closed in slumber, she came out upon the piazza and there continued her ceaseless march. At times the air seemed to stifle her, and she threw back her light mantle; again she shivered as with an ague, and, wrapping herself in the warm white folds, she clenched her hands fiercely and quickened her pace.

Presently there were footsteps on the gravel; a man's form emerged from the shrubbery and advanced toward the house. With his foot upon the lowest step he paused. The moonlight fell about him—a tall figure resting upon a cane.

Miss Montmorenci heard the advancing tread, turned swiftly and stood above, facing him haughtily, and on her guard.

The man gazed an instant, then impulsively stretched out his arms.

"Edith! O Edith, is it you?"

The answer came distinct enough.

"Yes, it is I!"

His hands dropped mutely; he rested heavily upon his cane.

"I did not know until to-night to whom I was indebted for the hospitality of the past weeks. The circumstances that have thrown us together once more have been beyond human control. I will go away now, and never again intrude upon you. O Edith, Edith!"

The agony of the tone seemed to pierce her. She drew a step nearer.

"Have you forgotten all the past?" he went on; "the years in which we were all in all to each other? Have you forgotten how, on this very spot, we planned our life together? You were not cold and proud then, Edith. I do believe you loved me then. Say you did; tell me it was not all a dream!"

"How dare you recall those days?" she asked, fiercely. "I was a fool then, for I believed in you, and you—you never loved me!" He recoiled as if from a blow.

"Good God!" he cried; "how can you say that? Not love you? What has made me a wanderer upon the face of the earth since the day upon which I received that letter containing your cruel dismissal? What has made me a stranger in my own land? What drew me back after years of exile, thinking to gaze once more upon the scenes among which my dream of happiness culminated and faded? Not love you? And you stand there and say that!"

Miss Montmorenci put up her hand uncertainly.

"There is some mistake here. The letter to which you allude—I never wrote it. I made no reply to your note asking to be released from your engagement, for I was ill at the time, and when I recovered you had left the country."

He ran up the steps quickly, spite of his lameness.

"Edith," he cried, "I never wrote you such a request! Your own act—or what I supposed to be such—separated us. Good heavens, if there should prove to have been foul play! If all these years we have suffered needlessly—for I have suffered, Edith, horribly, unspeakably. I loved you so madly, so absorbingly!"

Miss Montmorenci did not retreat from him, though she still stood expectantly, as if waiting to hear more.

"I have the letter yet in which, as I thought, you made the heartless proposal that our engagement should be cancelled. I made what protest I could, wrote you letter after letter, only to have them returned unopened. When I could do no more I left the country, and for ten years I have tried to forget you. Unsuccessful in that I came back, not knowing whether you were dead or alive, but drawn irresistibly toward your old home, wishing once more to look upon the place where my happiest days were passed, and then intending to go away forever. I could not have believed you still lived here, but an accident threw me upon your hands and we meet once more. Edith, tell me now truly, as you would speak to one whom you may never meet again on earth, did you ever love me?"

"Claud," she cried, "I have *always* loved you!" And then she glided into his outstretched arms, and he clasped her rapturously to his breast.

Thrilling and trembling with rapture she clung to him, feeling only that he was hers at last. They had waited so long, these lovers. Year after year happiness had flown from them, and coldness, and distrust, and worldliness had gathered thick about their hearts; but now the barriers were removed, and the love which each had cherished in secret was allowed to appear.

Miss Montmorenci's friends would not have recognized in her the cold and unapproachable heiress who had for so many years dazzled them by her beauty, and at the same time shocked them with her lack of anything approaching womanly tenderness.

There was much to tell; much that neither could explain. That some enemy had effected their separation was plain enough, but to whom to attribute the foul play, it was, at this late day, impossible to determine. They were together at last, and that fact rendered their happiness so complete as to cause the bitter past to sink into insignificance. Both had suffered, and to both the joy of this hour came like a foretaste of heaven.

Mr. Layton plead for an early wedding-day, and Miss Montmorenci promised to make what haste she could: but the en-



gagement was not made public, and when, at the beginning of the season, the city was electrified by the intelligence that they were really married, there were few who were not taken completely by surprise.

As few married couples pass through so severe a probation, let us hope that the meed of happiness which shall henceforth be meted out to them may be proportionately large.

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## MISS VIVIEN.

BY SARAH L. JOY.

"TELL us about it, Granger."

Tom Merriam's request was echoed by the half dozen men present, and Granger, with a laugh, took the cigar from his lips, laid himself back in the easy-chair, in the easiest of attitudes, and lazily answered:

"People generally are not so fond of telling their adventures when they have been a trifle worsted, but as Charlie Ruthven comes in for a share of this questionable glory, too, why I don't mind giving you my experience, just as a warning to you not to be bewitched by every pretty woman you meet; that's my failing, you know. I never could resist the sharp little weapons that Cupid shoots from sparkling eyes, no matter what their color is, and a pair of pouting lips plays the mischief with my heart. But as for Charlie, the clear-headed, cool-hearted Charlie, whom all the women adore because he *won't* adore them, for him to get so completely sold, it's worth getting fooled a dozen times one's self. By Jove, it's better than any play."

"How's that, Ruthven?" said Dick Stuyvesant, lazily turning his head to get a view of the handsome fellow who lay stretched on a sofa the other side of the room with his hands clasped above his head, and a look of the most perfect indifference in his face.

If ever a man gave you an idea of being bored to death by mere existence, Charlie Ruthven was the one. He half opened his eyes as Stuyvesant spoke.

"Just as Granger says," he coolly replied, sending such a cloud of smoke up from his mouth as nearly enveloped his curly brown head. "That woman came nearer raising the dence with me than any of her sex ever did before. She was a regular stunner though. Granger'll give you a description of her charms, he rather excels in that line." And he shot a mischievous glance at the easy-chair and its occupant as he spoke.

"Description be hanged!" was the rather irreverent answer. "I got muddled over her eyes, couldn't even tell the color. One day I thought they were that real purplish blue that always reminds one of pansies, and I was spooney to that degree that I wrote some very flowery verses and called them 'Pansy Eyes,' in which I mooned away to a fearful extent about the state of my affections, and depths of despair in which 'I should forevermore be plunged,' unless she gave me some hope that I held a winning hand, etc. A combination of poetry and play that seems remarkably funny as I think about it now, but I regarded it in an entirely different light that time. The next time I saw her, I vow her eyes were black, and I was completely mixed up. Whatever their color was, they were the most glorious eyes I ever saw, and you couldn't resist their fascination. She, like her eyes, was indescribable. Ruthven says the whole when he calls her a 'regular stunner,' and there wasn't a woman who

could equal her in Newport all the season.

"The first time I saw her, I was coming from a drive with Mollie Wingate, and she was on the piazza of the hotel watching the people as they came driving up. I couldn't help it, I motioned Mollie to look at her.

"Isn't she lovely, Miss Wingate?"

"Mollie looked up with a quizzical smile on her lips.

"The last is always the fairest with you, Mr. Granger."

"Wasn't that a cut, though? I was just a trifle annoyed, for I didn't care to have Mollie Wingate see my weaknesses so easily, but I only laughed and said:

"But isn't she?"

"Isn't she what?" very carelessly.

"A perfectly lovely woman."

"No," she said, bluntly.

"I looked at her in surprise.

"She is an extremely handsome woman, but lovely doesn't apply to her; there's a something in her face I don't like. I never could trust her.' And she went slowly into the house, humming a blithe German air as she went.

"I'd been uncommonly sweet on Mollie Wingate all the time we had been in Newport, and we'd been pretty good friends in town before, and really I did like her first-rate. I imagined then, she was jealous of my admiration of the stranger, but now I know that there was something in her straight-forward genuineness that instinctively felt the deception and worthlessness of the other.

"I determined to find out the fair unknown, and you know when you once set out for a thing of that kind it is usually easy of attainment. She sat near us at table, and I found Charlie quite as sensible of her charms as I was; in fact, I never knew him to evince so much interest in one of the sex before, and that, I think, made me a little keener in pursuit of the game.

"There was a very handsome man with her, whom she called Ambrose, and I was afraid it might prove her husband, and that he would raise an objection to my making love to his property; but as we found out it was only her brother. They were registered as Mr. Ambrose Vivien, Miss Vivien, Baltimore, Md.

"Getting acquainted with the brother was an easy matter; he was very gentlemanly in his bearing, and altogether jolly, so we got on charmingly. By-and-by he offered to in-

troduce us to his sister, and you may be sure we didn't refuse.

"We found Miss Vivien charming, and set to work to make ourselves agreeable. I don't know how she did it, but she managed to keep on the best terms with both of us, and make each one think he was the favored one. I was completely over head and ears in love. I quite forgot my former devotion to Mollie Wingate, but she didn't seem to take my defection much to heart.

"We were sitting on the piazza one evening, Miss Vivien and I, when she had been about three weeks at Newport and she said:

"Mr. Granger, I've got a peculiar request to make of you but I know you will not refuse me. There's not another person in the world whom I would ask, but you have been so kind, and seem such a dear friend, that I know I can trust you. You know Ambrose went to New York last night. Well, I expected him back to-day, but he has telegraphed me that he will be obliged to remain three or four days longer. I am especially provoked, for thinking he was coming home so soon, I did not think to ask him to replenish my pocket-book, and I spent the last of my money to-day. I want some to use to-morrow very much, and I thought perhaps you would be kind enough to lend it to me until Ambrose returns, or sends me a check as I telegraphed him to do."

"Of course I was delighted to help her out of her fix and let her have the money; and I'd like to know who wouldn't give his whole amount of bank-stock to have those eyes looking at one in such a pleading way! I'm sure I would, and I signified my willingness on the spot, but the generous creature would only accept two hundred dollars, and that with a fearful amount of apology and regret, and reproach for her own and Ambrose's carelessness.

"I couldn't stand that, and on the spot I offered to be her banker for life if she would only make me so happy by taking the name of Granger.

"She sidged and blushed and did all the proper things, and promised to give me her answer the next evening, let me kiss her hand several time, and her lips once, received the roll of greenbacks which I procured for her, and tripped away.

"She didn't make her appearance next morning at breakfast, but I didn't wonder much at that; no Miss Vivien at dinner—so I supposed she was purposely keeping out of

the way until evening. I was at the 'hop' in good season and stationed myself where I could see all the girls as they came in. Still no Miss Vivien, and I began to grow a little nervous and out of sorts, so I went out onto the balcony where I could look into the room and at the same time be out of the way. Going out I met Ruthven.

"Halloo, Granger, where the deuce is she?"

"She! who?"

"Miss Vivien."

"I don't know; she promised me the first waltz, and I've been waiting an awful while for her."

"That's the very dance she promised me."

"When?"

"Last night on the piazza, about ten o'clock."

"An hour after she promised it to me. Charlie, old boy, she's playing it on us, I fancy."

"I wonder why she hasn't been down all day; let's find out if she's sick." And going to the office, he asked the clerk to send up to Miss Vivien's room to see if she was ill.

"Miss Vivien's gone, sir," was the reply; 'left on the boat for Boston, this morning.'

"When does she return?" asked Charlie.

"Not at all, I fancy. She took all her luggage and said her brother was to meet her in Boston, and they were going to the White Mountains."

"We sauntered back to the piazza in silence. After the first amazement was over I called out:

"Sold, old fellow! I went cheap. Two hundred dollars and a box of gloves No. sixes bought me."

"What do you mean?" said Ruthven.

"Why, my lady, borrowed two hundred dollars of me last night, until Ambrose came back, a time that I guess is very far in the future."

"Of you! Why, she borrowed three hundred of me until the same time. The truth is, we're both victims of misplaced confidence, and a pretty face, and the stiller we keep about this little affair the better."

"I acquiesced, but somehow things will leak out, and our adventure with Miss Vivien became pretty well known in Newport, and we had to endure a good deal of chaffing from the fellows, and as for the women, they were a deuced sight worse. Mollie Wingate's blue eyes danced with enjoyment, though she was merciful enough not to say anything, but I'd rather bear all the other women's tongues than that look in her eyes. I wish, though, I knew what became of our 'gay deceiver.'"

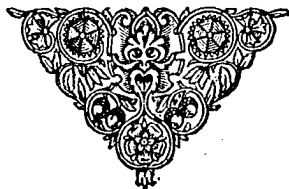
"I can tell you," said Dick Stuyvesant; "she came to Mt. Desert straight from Newport, she and Ambrose, and she was running just such a rig with Bob Kingsley and 'your most obedient,' when the fun was cut short, by the appearance of a detective who claimed the Vivien as some old confidence friends of his that he had been looking for, for sometime, and he was so glad to see them that he wouldn't leave Mt. Desert without them. They were not brother and sister, and their names were not Vivien."

"Who were they then?" asked Ruthven.

"Mr. and Mrs. John Munger of New York, with several aliases, the last the name under which we know them. For my part I fight shy of strange women, with handsome brothers, in the future."

"I fight shy of all women, strange or otherwise, with or without brothers," said Ruthven.

"I'm going to marry Mollie Wingate as a protection against women," laughed Granger. "I find I can't take care of myself, and I know I should fall a victim to the next pretty face, even if its owner called herself Miss Vivien."



## MISS WALTHAM'S WAY.

BY CARRIE D. BEEBE.

MISS WALTHAM had a way of her own. Perhaps I ought to have said *will*; but in that case you would have thought I meant her last testament; and as she was under age, and with little or no property of her own, it was not at all probable that she ever thought of making a will.

Miss Waltham's way was peculiar. At least, so Mrs. Grundy said; and every one knows she is the very best authority upon *all matters relating to the domestic affairs* of her neighbors. Mrs. Grundy, moreover, declared that Miss Waltham was "singular and hoydenish," and she was thankful she was no daughter of hers. Perhaps if Miss Waltham had overheard the old lady's remark she would have returned thanks for the same cause; but that is neither here nor there, so I will tell my story.

The young lady in question was the only child of a wealthy broker, and usually did quite as she pleased in most matters. She was originally christened Philippe, but her acquaintances seemed to ignore the fact. Her father, who was not a little proud of her, always introduced her pompously as "My daughter;" and Mrs. Waltham, a mild, unassuming little woman, with delicate health, seldom addressed her except as "love," "peach-bloom," or "my dear child." Cousin Guy, who was a poor relative residing in the family, and of no consequence whatever, except that about twice a year, regularly, he took a fancy that he was in love with his cousin, generally vibrated between "Phil" and "Diamond-Eyes," according to his mood; usually the former, however, for Miss Waltham always treated him with indifference.

She was seldom voted a beauty, though all acknowledged her as extremely brilliant. She was witty in conversation, and a great belle, despite Mrs. Grundy's assertions. She was tall, and graceful in movement, with black hair, a rich complexion, and clear bright eyes.

Miss Waltham was particularly fond of fine horses, and of riding and driving. She was an accomplished equestrian, and usually, upon fine afternoons, she might be seen, accompanied by her father or a

groom, galloping through the Park, upon her spirited black horse Chieftain.

One pleasant day, as she was preparing for her ride, as usual, a servant brought her the direful intelligence that the groom had been taken ill suddenly, and could not go out.

What was to be done? Mr. Waltham had gone with the carriage, upon business, and, of course, the coachman was with him.

"I think I'll go alone, mamma dear," said Miss Waltham, as she shook out the folds of her riding-habit, and slowly drew her well-fitting gauntlets over her slender hands. "I dislike, above all things, to be disappointed about my ride."

"But, my dear child, how would it look?" mildly inquired the rather weak-minded little lady in the armchair, who was lounging over a book.

"Look, mamma?" Miss Waltham turned to the mirror to arrange one of the jauntiest of neckties. "It would look extremely well, I think."

"But it would shock people, my love," continued Mrs. Waltham, with a fainter show of resistance than before.

"Well, I like that exceedingly, mamma, so long as I do nothing morally wrong. People like to be shocked, too; for they would have very little to talk about else."

"But suppose some accident should happen to you, Peach-bloom? I would never forgive myself for permitting you to go out alone, never?"

"No accident has ever yet happened to me, mamma, and I am accustomed to riding out in the Park almost every day. I am neither timid, nervous nor delicate; and I am just as much at ease with Chieftain as though I were sitting in an armchair beside you. But if you will be uneasy about me, I will remain, of course." And she made a faint movement to withdraw her gloves.

"Do just as you think best, my dear child."

Mrs. Waltham held up her mouth for a kiss, and then relapsed into her book, quite as unconcerned as though her daughter

were accompanied by a score of knights; and Miss Waltham ran down stairs, sprang lightly upon her horse, and rode away, quite oblivious of the numerous Argus eyes which, peeping from behind the curtained windows along the avenue, were rolled up in modest horror at her daring.

It was a lovely day for riding, with a refreshing breeze, redolent of sweets of autumn flowers; and Miss Waltham's eyes began to flash like diamonds, and her cheeks assumed a real peach-bloom tint. She prolonged her ride, bowing gayly or haughtily to the numerous acquaintances she met in the handsome carriages which rolled along the smooth roads of the Park.

At last she uttered a little expression of dismay; for a few rods ahead she recognized Mr. Fay, one of the most annoying and persistent of her middle-aged admirers.

"If Mr. Fay continues to practise riding for half a century longer, he may, possibly, become a tolerable equestrian, but I doubt it," she soliloquized, with a little shiver. "Poor man! his face is as red as his hair. What an effort it must be for him to ride out every day!"

In another moment Mr. Fay had glanced uneasily backward, and, seeing Miss Waltham, he succeeded, after much shouting and rein-twitching, in bringing his fiery steed to a halt.

"My dear Miss Waltham!" he exclaimed, effusively. "Hem!—unexpected pleasure this. But," striking an attitude, "don't tell me you are so imprudent as to ride out without a—a protector!"

"I did intend to ride alone to-day, Mr. Fay, though, as you will observe, I have company at present. I must say, however, that I enjoy riding by myself exceedingly."

She nodded indifferently, touched Chief-tain lightly with her whip, and he bounded away.

Mr. Fay whistled softly to himself, and turned his horse's head down Equestrian Alley.

"I served him right!" observed Miss Waltham. "The conceited creature! He fancies that all the ladies are in love with him because he is so rich."

At this moment she became conscious that some one was approaching on horse-back, almost beside her, in fact; and, casting a quick sidelong glance to the left, she met the merry eyes of a gentleman who

was tall, and handsomely mounted; and who, moreover, rode remarkably well.

"I wonder who he can be?" thought Miss Waltham, as she affected to turn carelessly away.

For a moment the man rode almost by her side. Then he turned, and shot off to the left.

Miss Waltham partially checked her horse and looked after him. She had just time to observe that his hair was brown and wavy, his head well-set, and that he wore a close-fitting black velvet coat and cap, when he also turned, and looked directly toward her. She drew up her rein suddenly, and bowed low to a friend in a carriage near, quite angry with herself for having been detected in the act of gazing after a strange gentleman.

Just then Mr. Fay's burly form appeared in the distance, his hat awry, and his coat-skirts fluttering in the wind. Miss Waltham could not resist a merry laugh, in spite of her vexation, as she compared the appearance of the two men.

As a rule, horses in the city and country behave very differently. In the country they will shy, or start off at a breakneck pace at the sight of nothing more than a white rock by the roadside. Or, if no such appalling spectacle is near at hand, they will prick up their ears and sniff if a pig happens to venture in their sight, and act in a ridiculous manner generally.

But bring these same horses to the city, and they grow docile at once. They are astonished at nothing. They appear, like Mark Tapley, to have sold off stock, and retired from the business altogether.

So it happened that Miss Waltham, although accustomed to riding daily, had scarcely ever witnessed a runaway. To-day, however, she was in luck. A sudden commotion was raised at a little distance, and a shout of "runaway!" reached her ears. Carriages hurried past, but still she was not frightened. She grasped the rein and whip firmly, to be ready for any emergency; and, thinking it the best thing she could do under the circumstances, she halted for a few moments.

She soon caught a glimpse of the runaways, at a little distance ahead, and they seemed perfectly furious. Her heart began to beat a little faster at the sight, though she remained quiet outwardly. The horses were nearing a fork in the road,

and she hoped they might pass that way. Just then Chieftain caught sight of them, and refused to stand still.

In vain Miss Waltham tightened the reins, and called him a "fool" and a "good horsie" by turns, and ordered him to "whoa!" Her heart beat so fast that it seemed to stop her voice, and Chieftain wouldn't "whoa." He reared and plunged, and danced like a trained pony at the circus. Onward rushed the frantic team. They passed the fork—were coming directly toward her, and, to add to her terror, Chieftain seemed determined to rush into the middle of the road.

At that moment some one grasped her bridle-rein, and urged her horse up the bank at the right. She saw at once it was the stranger she had met a few moments before. As soon as they were out of harm's way he paused, still holding her rein, and standing, with his beautiful blood-bay, who was perfectly under his control, between her and the runaways, who rushed by, rolling their eyes upward until only the whites were visible. Chieftain, however, had recognized the gentleman as master of the situation, and became entirely quiet.

Miss Waltham gave a sigh of relief, and turned toward her companion.

"Sir," she said, with rather more dignity than the case demanded, for she was trembling as with the ague, "I am deeply indebted to you, a stranger. However, I don't think there was very much danger in the situation, and," trying to smile, "I believe I was not frightened?"

To do Miss Waltham justice, she had not recovered her senses sufficiently to know what a dreadful fib she was telling.

"Nonsense!" returned her companion, a little sharply. "You are as pale as a ghost this minute, and you tremble so you can hardly sit upon your horse. If you had not been too much alarmed to speak in your natural voice, Chieftain would have behaved more quietly."

The peach-bloom shade came back to Miss Waltham's cheeks, and her eyes flashed a thought vindictively.

"Thank you!" she answered, icily; "both for your assistance and your advice. If you have no further suggestions to offer, I should like to return home." And she turned her eyes to his almost defiantly.

He laughed, an odd but musical little laugh, as one would to a willful child.

"You shall return at once if you choose, but I hope you will permit me to accompany you; for I think it unsafe for you to ride alone, Miss Waltham, under the circumstances."

He knew her, then. She ransacked her brain to try to discover who he could be, but to no purpose. He looked very manly, almost handsome, as he leaned back with a haughty air, and a smile that belied it in his brown eyes. He did not seem inclined to satisfy her curiosity in regard to who he was, and she would not ask. She *had* been frightened, she knew it now, and there was something grateful to her in his protection.

"Sir," she said, in a more kindly tone, but turning her horse's head toward the road, "I am thankful to you for your aid, and also for your solicitude. But ere this the runaways must have been caught or become wearied, so there is nothing further to fear from them. I will bid you good-day."

He made no objection, but touched his hat gracefully, with scarcely a bend of his haughty head.

Miss Waltham rode swiftly away.

"I believe I was cross," she soliloquized. "But I couldn't help it. I was obliged to be either cross or hysterical, for somehow I seemed to be completely unstrung. Of course I chose the lesser evil, for I hate fussiness. I don't think the gentleman is really handsome, but he has a magnetic, or at least, a very impressive face; strong, proud, and gentle, too. But of what am I thinking?" And giving Chieftain a light touch with the whip, she hastened home.

She dismounted without assistance, and glanced hastily up the avenue as she ran up the steps. Something which caught her eye caused her heart to beat faster. It was her acquaintance of the Park, slowly riding down the avenue. He had followed her at a distance.

Half angry, perplexed, but more restless than either, Miss Waltham entered the parlors, and peeped cautiously out from behind the curtains; but her cavalier was nowhere in sight. Unsatisfied, she stepped out upon the balcony, first looking down the street, to show her indifference, before she glanced upward. Unnecessary precaution! Mrs. Grundy was reconnoitering from her second-story front window, and a stray organ-grinder, upon the lookout for

a customer, paused to give her a rickety tune; but that was all. So she went into the house and passed up the staircase, humming under her breath, "Bold can he speak, and fairly ride."

Mrs. Waltham had finished her book and retired to the sofa.

"Are you home, my love?" she asked, drowsily, as her daughter entered the room.

"Yes, mamma." And Miss Waltham sat reflectively down before the fire, and commenced to tap the toe of her pretty boot lightly with her riding-whip.

Her father found her thus an hour afterward, when he returned to dinner.

"Why, how is this, my daughter?" he exclaimed, in surprise. "You surely did not ride until now?"

She sprang up as though roused from a reverie.

"I returned some time ago, papa," she said, "but have been musing by the fire. I will be ready for dinner in a few moments." And she flitted away.

She dressed hastily. Throwing on a dark claret silk, she smoothed her braids, and drew some white flowers through them. Her cheeks were flushed, and her eyes blazing, as she went down stairs.

"You appear unusually brilliant to-night, Diamond-Eyes," said Cousin Guy, admiringly.

"I'm sorry!" returned Miss Waltham, rather snappishly, and pushing aside her plate of soup untasted.

Mr. Waltham was somewhat abstracted, his mind intent upon business matters. His good wife never questioned Miss Waltham's moods, and the meal progressed in silence.

Just before it was time to retire that evening, when Guy, failing to make himself agreeable, had taken himself off to his room, and Mrs. Waltham had fallen into a doze upon the sofa; Miss Waltham spoke:

"Papa!"

"Well, my daughter?" And Mr. Waltham laid aside his paper, to give undivided attention to what she had to say.

"I rode alone in the Park to-day."

"Ah, that was rather imprudent, my dear."

"I know it." And Miss Waltham looked straight into the fire. "I did not think so, however, until after I tried it, or I would not have gone out alone."

"Ah—well?" And Mr. Waltham yawned. "It is a matter of very little consequence, so long as you met with no accident, my child."

"But I did meet with—an adventure, papa." She paused for a moment, and then briefly related the incident of her ride.

"Indeed! strange!" remarked her father, in his concise way.

"But what do you think of his conduct, papa?" inquired Miss Waltham, with hesitation.

"Very proper indeed, my daughter, under the circumstances. You failed to recognize him, you say?"

"Yes sir."

"And I suppose his horse was strange to you also?"

"O yes!"

"Think no more about it, my child. He is evidently a gentleman; but, even if he is not, he could not harm you in any way, if he felt so inclined."

"Harm me?" Miss Waltham smiled a little to herself. "I did not think of such a thing, papa."

She kissed him good-night, and went up to her room.

A few evenings afterward Miss Waltham was equipped for a ball, in a wonderful dress of alternate flounces and puffings of white and cherry silk; with two camellias, a red and a white, in her hair.

"I'm all ready, papa," she said, as she appeared in the parlor. "Good-night, mamma darling!" And kissing the indolent little woman upon the sofa, she accompanied her father to the carriage. Very brilliant she looked, as, resting her hand lightly upon his arm, she entered the thronged drawing-rooms, and greeted her hostess Mrs. Dean.

"What shocking taste!" exclaimed Mrs. Grundy, behind her fan, to her sister Miss Pryer. "Too glaring, altogether!" And she shook her head in a severe manner.

"Looks as though she were rigged out for a war-dance!" responded Miss Pryer, with a confused idea about squaws, and war-dances, and the noble red men.

Meanwhile Miss Waltham was gayly chatting to a lively group who had gathered near.

"Ah, Mr. Fay," she said, with a laugh, "I have been denied the pleasure of seeing you since we met last Thursday in the Park."



Mr. Waltham appeared at her side.

"One moment," he said.

She turned.

"My daughter, Mr. Ashburn."

Mr. Ashburn bowed low.

"I believe we met in the Park on Thursday, also," he said, with the same smile, which she remembered so well, in his eyes. "I hope you have quite recovered from your fright, Miss Waltham."

She bent her head. The blood rushed into her face, a crimson tide. For the moment her accustomed self-possession forsook her. Habitually haughty and indifferent to the most distinguished lions of society, her eyelids fluttered and drooped in the presence of this man, who would have been undeniably plain, as she confessed, but for his handsome eyes.

"There is something connected with the manner in which we first meet a person," thought she, "that will cling to us forever afterward. I was nervous and frightened when he addressed me in the Park, and I shall always feel like an idiot when I meet him."

She rallied, however, and soon regained her haughty self-control, outwardly, at least.

"We should be friends, Miss Waltham," he remarked, pleasantly, "as we are to be neighbors during the coming winter."

She looked up vaguely.

"I don't understand you," she replied.

"You are not posted in the neighboring gossip, I see," he laughed. "Know, then, that I am Mr. Mott's stepson, and I have come to reside with my mother, his wife, for the present."

"Ah!" And Miss Waltham grew more dazed than ever.

He did not follow her home from the Park, then, but was only returning home, as Mr. Mott's house was but a few doors above Mr. Waltham's. But that was not the worst of it. His stepsister, Selina Mott, was one of the most notorious gossips upon the avenue. She had, undoubtedly, explained Miss Waltham's character to Mr. Ashburn in its very worst light. But there was one consolation: Mrs. Mott seemed like a quiet sensible lady, and, possibly, might be more charitable toward Miss Waltham's shortcomings.

The young lady in question answered Mr. Ashburn's remarks rather absently as she turned these things about in her mind.

But, suddenly recollecting that she was growing abstracted, she called herself by a very unflattering epithet, and forced a laugh and gay remark.

The band struck up a waltz.

"Will you dance?" he asked.

She bowed, and they swept away. Miss Waltham liked waltzing. To-night she felt as though she could never tire. On, on they whirled, and when at last they paused, she was not weary; only apparently restored to her usual spirits. Her complexion was dazzling—her eyes seemed to shoot out rays of light. Never had she appeared more brilliant or fascinating. Her sparkling wit called out peals of laughter from the lively circle which, wherever she went, continued to crowd about her.

Nor did she seem to tire. Her low musical laugh was clearly heard through the bursts of merriment about her, and her quick tongue was ever ready with a caustic reply.

Lee Ashburn watched her admiringly at first, then wonderingly and anxiously. Toward the close of the evening, as they were returning from a dance, he addressed her in a low tone, bending his head to hers:

"I wish to introduce you to my mother," he said, as though the two ladies had never met. "I desire you to know her more intimately, for I think you will like her."

Miss Waltham seemed slightly surprised, but assented at once. As they made their way through the crowd, he felt her hand tremble upon his arm, and he knew it was with nervousness from the effect of continued excitement.

Mrs. Mott sat in a quiet corner, and she made room for Miss Waltham by her side. She was very engaging in conversation, and there was a quiet refined beauty about her face.

"I am afraid you are weary," she said, in a gentle way. "You have been the life of the ball to-night, but I fear you have over-exerted yourself. You should be more careful. Young people will never learn to value their health rightly, I think."

There was something so kind and motherly in her voice and manner, that Miss Waltham could not feel in the least degree wounded by the reproof lurking in her words. She only looked surprised.

"Thank you," she answered, after pausing a moment. She felt strangely nervous,

as though she must unburden her heart to this sincere friend. She went on in a low hurried tone, "You are the first friend who has had the moral courage to speak to me kindly about my wild ways. I suppose I am not very gentle. But my mother's health is delicate, so she never comes out with me, and I have no one to advise me, for papa likes to see me gay. As for people generally, I like to shock them, they seem to enjoy it so, and feel so comfortable and Pharisaic over it."

"You wrong yourself in this," answered the low gentle voice. "I like to see young persons gay, and I dislike gossip and public censure; but in view of your own health, you should be more moderate in your mirth."

"I am not often as wild as I was to-night," confessed Miss Waltham, humbly, entirely disarmed.

"My dear," said Mrs. Mott, "you must pardon me for speaking to you in this serious manner. This is no place for a lecture, but I thought, as we seemed quite alone, I might speak."

"I am grateful to you," Miss Waltham answered, sincerely. But the flush had left her face. She was very pale, and her eyelids drooped over her weary eyes. "I would like to go home," she said, as Mr. Ashburn came forward. "Could you take me to papa?"

He offered his arm at once.

"You are very good," she continued; "you saw I was weary, and that is why you brought me here."

Next day Lee Ashburn sat quietly chatting with his mother, when his stepsister, Miss Selina Mott, entered the room.

"How could you be so blind, Lee, as to dance attendance upon that consummate flirt Miss Waltham?" she asked, in a severe tone.

"I did dance with her," he answered, with provoking indifference. "She waltzes beautifully, too."

"You know very well what I mean. You fell in love with her at first sight, too, just as every other man does."

"Did I? You are a remarkably shrewd woman, Selina."

"I am not blind," she replied, sharply.

"I did not meet her for the first time last night, however," he said.

"You are in love with her, at all events; and she will jilt you as sure as you give

her an opportunity," proclaimed Selina.

"I shall be on my guard," laughed Lee, "since you have been so good as to warn me."

"Her conduct last night was perfectly outrageous!" continued Miss Mott. "I was really shocked by it."

"But you laughed immoderately at her wit, and tried, like many others, to encourage her, and draw her out, to see how far she would go, that you might talk of it afterward. And I confess I could see but little difference between her remarks and yours, except that hers were more polished, keener and better-timed." And bowing stiffly, he left the room.

The sudden friendship which began between Mrs. Mott and Miss Waltham ripened into a warmer feeling as the winter advanced. Mrs. Grundy opened her eyes wide in astonishment. Miss Waltham had an intimate friend at last, a woman more than twice her own age. Almost every pleasant morning she would put on her hat and run up for a cosy informal chat with Mrs. Mott, who seemed passionately fond of her.

"She is growing bolder than ever," Selina said. "How can you be so blind, Lee? Do you not see she is angling for you?"

"I fancy Miss Waltham has plenty of suitors," he answered, carelessly. "A woman with her beauty and accomplishments need not angle for any one."

Selina was far from being a beauty, so she remained silent. Before the season was half over, however, she bestowed her hand upon Mr. Fay. They did not prolong their wedding tour, and she became engrossed in furnishing a home of her own. She issued invitations for an elegant reception as soon as she was installed as its mistress.

Miss Waltham was there, in a dress which was so very becoming, that half the ladies were wild with envy.

Mrs. Fay, all smiles and sweetness, managed to say to Miss Waltham, at the first opportunity:

"My dear, have you lost your old tact, or is Lee Ashburn such an incorrigible woman-hater he refuses to yield to your charms? Surely, you used to bring your adorers to a proposal in half the time you have bestowed upon him."

Her words were so cutting, and her

smile so maliciously sweet, that Miss Waltham set her teeth together involuntarily for the moment; then she answered, sweetly:

"I have lost my tact. Do please enlighten me as to the manner in which you entrapped Mr. Fay."

Mrs. Selina blushed hotly, for she knew Mr. Fay had been Miss Waltham's most humble and devoted suitor. But she recovered herself in time to tap her tormentor playfully upon her shoulder with her fan.

"O, you naughty girl!" she exclaimed; "no one need instruct you in the matter of flirting. But, seriously, my dear, I advise you to give it up immediately. When we think men the slaves of our very whims, they are only laughing at us, and the wildest flirts never marry, at least, until they are old."

With this parting shot she hurried away, while she had the best of the encounter. It is doubtful, however, if Miss Waltham would have resisted the attack, even if Mrs. Selina had stood her ground. She, herself, had of late wondered that Mr. Ashburn, always so deferential and kind, did not become more lover-like; but the riddle was solved now. Probably he had made Selina his confidant.

She went home that night in a state of wonderful unrest. Her father had been slightly indisposed that day, and did not accompany her to the party; so she went in the carriage with Mr. and Mrs. Mott, under Mr. Ashburn's especial charge. It was but a short ride, only a block after Mr. and Mrs. Mott left the carriage. Mr. Ashburn, mistaking her grieved silence for weariness, expressed his regret in a tender almost caressing tone.

Miss Waltham, angry with herself because the words were so grateful to her ear, wondered if he could be laughing at her, and then felt an insane desire to burst into tears and ask him if it were true. She laid a doleful head upon her pillow that night.

"I must have worn my heart upon my sleeve," she thought, "or Mrs. Fay could not have wounded it so unmercifully. Well, I am thankful for her warning. I suppose every one is saying the same thing." And, after sobbing a little, she fell asleep.

Mrs. Fay's mansion was not so far away but she could still look down the Avenue

and watch the state of affairs at her father's. She soon discovered that the morning calls which Miss Waltham had made all winter were discontinued, or postponed until after Lee had gone down town. Moreover, Miss Waltham had treated Mr. Ashburn very coolly at three successive parties, and he had grown quite moody in consequence.

"She's jilted him!" she soliloquized, one day; "just as I knew she would if she had the chance."

Having arrived at this comfortable conclusion she turned her eyeglasses in another direction, for the purpose of spying the huge motes which she fancied existed in her other neighbor's eyes.

Mr. Ashburn was at a loss to account for the change in Miss Waltham's demeanor, except upon the ground of fickleness. He was sorely disappointed, for he had thought her sincere. They drifted further and further apart. He became moody and silent, she seemed to recover all her old wildness of spirit. More than once, when their opinions chanced to clash, they absolutely and openly quarrelled. Lee could bear it no longer.

"I will leave the city," he said, "and cure myself of this hopeless passion before I return."

Miss Waltham called upon Mrs. Mott soon afterwards, and learned of his intentions.

"I wish him to remain," said Mrs. Mott, regretfully. "He is my only child, and I like him to be near me. A month ago," and she looked significantly in Miss Waltham's face, "I was sure he would find the place sufficiently attractive to hold him here for life. I was very glad, especially as he has become almost invaluable to Mr. Mott in directing his business affairs. But my poor boy seems sorely troubled of late, and desires a change of scene. He is quite determined upon setting out for the West to-morrow."

Miss Waltham flushed guiltily, and drooped her eyes. He *had* loved her then, and Mrs. Mott thought she had refused him. To hide her confusion she rose, went to the window and looked down the street. A tall form came up the sidewalk, and a pair of clear brown eyes looked up to the window where she stood. A quick smile—then the face turned away.

Miss Waltham would have drawn back, but it was too late. Presently decided steps came up the stairs, and she turned

and gave Mr. Ashburn a somewhat nervous greeting.

"You are going away?" she said.

"Yes, to-morrow." And he looked grave and sad.

"Shall you be absent long?" The query was slowly spoken.

"A year, perhaps."

Then came an awkward pause. At last Miss Waltham spoke:

"I must go," she said. "You will, of course, call around this evening to bid me good-by?"

"If you will allow me to do so," he answered, in evident surprise.

"I shall expect you." And she was gone.

She dressed rather elaborately that evening; she put on a crimson silk, and braided flowers in her ear. When dinner was over she went up to take a survey of herself in the mirror.

"I don't like it," she said, drawing the flowers from her braids. Still she was dissatisfied. "It is too plain now," thought she. Then a servant announced that Mr. Ashburn was waiting, and, tossing the flowers upon her dressing-bureau, she went down, her cheeks burning, her eyes flashing. Mr. Ashburn was unusually pale.

"It is very hard to go away and leave my friends," he said, regretfully.

"Then why do you go?" she asked, turning suddenly toward him.

"I—I—it is just as hard to stay?"

"But why?" persisted Miss Waltham, unmercifully.

"Because—I love a lady—"

"Then tell her so."

"But she despises me?"

"How do you know?"

It was a difficult question to answer.

"I don't know," he said, slowly, at last, "but I fancy so."

"You are going away upon a fancy then. That is so like a man. A woman would know the truth."

"You don't know what you are advising me to do!" he exclaimed, excitedly.

Miss Waltham was slightly provoked.

"He is so stupid!" thought she; "he is actually blushing. 'I wonder if he expects me to propose?'"

Mr. Ashburn rose and commenced pacing the room. Then he paused, and suddenly wheeling a low chair to her side, he sat down.

"Do you know," he said, impetuously,

"that I am going away because you hate me and treat me so distantly, when I love you with my whole soul?"

"Me?"

"You?"

"Yes, I know it."

"You are laughing at me!" he cried.

"Indeed, I am not. We have both been blind. I was charged with angling in vain for your love, and I became distant and cold. But this morning, from your mother's words and your own actions, I became convinced that you loved me. Still, custom does not allow a woman to take such a thing for granted; she must wait until duly informed she is beloved before she can seem aware of the fact. So I asked you to come and bid me good-by, hoping you would change your mind, or, rather, unburden it. It was all I could do."

"What a fool I've been!" he exclaimed, himself once more.

"I never did admire Solons," she responded, attempting to be merry.

"I am thankful, for my sake," he returned; and by this time he discovered she was trembling nervously. "Are you quite sure you love me?" he asked.

"Yes."

"But your father; will he consent to our marriage?"

"Readily, for I always have my way."

"A blessed way it is!" he exclaimed, with a lover's enthusiasm. "If it had not been for your good sense and that same sweet wonderful way, I should have left you, stupidly fancying you hated me."

"But you will not go now?"

"Never, if you will let me stay."

"Stay!"